

# ORIENTAL CINEMA

AND VIDEO

JAN #1  
\$2.75



**THE NINJA ISSUE!**  
**NINJAS! SUPERHEROES!**  
**HONG KONG ACTION FILMS!**  
**GIANT MONSTERS!**  
**JACKIE CHAN!**  
**ASIA'S FEMME FATALES!**



# ORIENTAL CINEMA

## VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1 JANUARY, 1994

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BACK COVER - AMY YIP

Jesus Christ! Oh God!Oops, there I go talking to myself again. But seriously (almost), it's amazing that OC has reached a 16th issue! The odds of it surviving this long were as likely as finding a vegetarian in a slaughterhouse. If you're unfamiliar with OC, then I don't really like you, but feel I should introduce it to you; here's its condensed history:

1976: Being a little boy in elementary school, I had yet to deal with sex, drugs, condoms, alcohol or peer pressure (THAT all happened a few months later). So I spent my time creating handwritten xeroxed fanzines like JAPANESE MONSTERS, JAPANESE MOVIE SCI-FI and JAPANESE MONSTERS & SUPERHEROES. These kiddie-zines were competing with other rags from fans, all trying to be the next JAPANESE FANTASY FILM JOURNAL (Greg Shoemaker's grand daddy fanzine).

1977: It was around this time that OC arose out of the remains of all these other rags. Again, the goal was to be as serious, in-depth and upright as possible. JFFJ, JAPANESE GIANTDOM and my fanzines were intricate yet dull, so unlike

my real-life behavior. So OC's 1970s Volume was a typical, straight forward newsletter for technogeeks.

1980: OC continued, but the other 'Japantasy' zines became as extinct as the dinosaur movies they drooled over. OC was the only one not concerned with how many toes were on the original Godzilla costume, since it covered more genres, there were always a few readers. So OC's second volume, that of the 1980s, lacked any major competition; no risk of losing readers to some other rag.

1985: By this time, I knew I could be myself. At the risk of offending everyone, I put in as much of myself as possible, into MY fanzine, which officially became "DAMON FOSTER PRESENTS O.C." Screw the xeroxed look, I was into color covers, creative lay-outs, ultra rare, ground breaking info, and injecting my own philosophy and attitude into OC. No more whiny analysis, but plenty of cynicism, humor, social statements, and the real me! Sure, I was egotistical about it, but felt I had a right to be; considering the hard work and money I put into it. I NEVER broke even, the zine cost me

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Pictured to the  
left: Maggie  
Cheung



Editor Damon Fowler (right) in *AGE OF DEMONS*

an arm and a leg

1990s. So welcome to OC's 3rd volume! Somewhat smaller, but it was either make it smaller or make no OC at all. This is the first time I ever dealt with a publisher, so I don't know what to expect. Hopefully, it will be easier and more efficient now that Hugh Gallagher is stuck with typesetting and pastes-ups. Haha! Now it's all HIS problem! I painstakingly typed up the other OCs myself, on a Macintosh and IBM, Desktop Publishing and Word Perfect were never my strong points. But most importantly, thanks to Hugh, OC continues to flourish, amid a whole new game of young fanzines about Far Eastern films. The only difference is that the 1970s zines only cared about Godzilla, while the newer ones focus almost exclusively on HK's trendy hits. OC has seen fanzines come and go, so odds are, these newer whipper snappers will die out once the HK craze dies. If history is a lesson, OC just might be around after the rest disappear (again), and will be covering whatever new Far Eastern fandom comes along. Regardless; so there you have it! The history of all three volumes of OC! Next time, I'll be sure to tell you my life story!

Those of you who are interested in getting future issues and subscriptions should contact Hugh Gallagher. If you're interested in information about back issues, or wish to send comments or contributions, contact me. Damon Foster, P.O. Box 576, Fremont, CA 94537-0576. Don't mix our addresses up! Hugh is in Illinois, I'm in California. We're both different people involved in different aspects of the business! We both have separate lives and projects. So don't confuse us. Any questions directed to either of us, however, must be accompanied by a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope, to insure a response.

At this point, OC's 1990s volume is experimental; the categories, column and genres may be drastically changed next issue. To save space, older OC column like TERROR YAN and KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE have been combined for form this issue's JAPANTASY column. I don't necessarily like combining Japan's superheroes with Japan's science fiction movies, since both genres offer so much individually. But this is just an experiment. Last issue's CHOP SOCKIE REPORT and MODERN HEROES OF HONG KONG have been blended into HONG KONG HEROES: NEW AND OLD. Again, the newer HK titles offer so many genres, as do the old, so maybe combining them is unfair; we'll see. For you new readers, the ones I don't like as yet, you may feel alienated or out of touch when I occasionally use phrases and words you've never heard of, like 'Kamen Rider', 'Sasuke', 'Sento', 'gyouki', 'Ushu Kei', 'chiranba' or JAC. Sorry, but I've described and introduced all this 'new' stuff many times before, and haven't enough time nor space to give a history lesson. This is not a sales pitch to get you to buy back issues, I'm just tired of repeating myself every time I gain a new reader! Keep in mind that OC is designed to introduce you to a whole new world of genres, like and TV, from various countries.

and doing so is bound to be confusing and frustrating at first. The fact that about 75% of these productions are not available in English may annoy you all the more.

And now MY DISCLAIMER: I've always hated censorship, but see nothing wrong with warning you about my writing style. The main goal, is to inform. However, I see it as very important to amuse you as well (while not all of you care about all of CG's genres, Hopefully you have a sense of humor, thereafter you'll read the whole issue, not just the section on John Woo). So occasionally, I try to inject my type of crude humor into my articles. Everybody's opinion can offend somebody else, nobody is immune. I haven't the time to find out what each and every one of you finds offensive, so I have no way to keep my jokes unfriendly to all of you. Keep in mind that it's humor and only humor, I'm not trying to hurt anybody's feelings. Also, my opinions are indeed MY OPINIONS, I'm pretty sick of all these other publications calling me and my work 'opinionated', which is hypocritical, we're all opinionated to somebody else. When I write a negative review of a film you like, I might say, "This film sucks", instead of "I think this film sucks". That's because it takes up less space that way! So keep in mind, it's all my personal viewpoint, always open to debates and second opinions. However, I should point out that I am God, I created all these movies, as well as you, and I shouldn't be questioned: or I'll strike you down! [And if you believe that, you've no concept of sarcasm and shouldn't be reading CG, and are probably one of the moronic writers who thinks I'm opinionated].

But enough of my 'opinionating'! Get a load of this edition, the Ninja issue! The ninja film and TV game has more productions than there are back-up toilets in a Mexican bus station, so I felt it was time to do an in-depth look at what's easily the worst subgenre (in a fun sort of way) of the world of Far Eastern action! Excuse me while I go

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Damon Foster

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# CELLULOID ASSASSINS



Just as karate came from kung fu, just as Gamera came from Godzilla, just as all these nauter rage came from OG, the ninjas came from the Lin Kuai ("Forest Demons"), a Chinese clan from around the Shang Dynasty (1523-1028 BC). I can't remember exactly what, my memory isn't that good! Them Lin Kuais were a mere family trying to survive in the wilderness, much like **THE WILDERNESS FAMILY**, except that they constantly studied nature to overcome the hardships of their environment. Their numbers grew over several centuries, as they continued to study and practice what would later become Japan's ninja arts.

These ancient Chinese survivalists, having undergone excruciating training for generations, had achieved abilities as natural hunters which far surpassed what was considered humanly possible. As China's population grew, the clan came in contact with nearby villages, and found its townsfolk easy prey to kill, kidnap, steal from, or simply kick them in the kichi nuts.

Some of the Lin C traveled, thereby spreading these acquired arts to other countries, resulting in Korea's sajas and of course, Japan's ninjas. The ninja clans perfected espionage; they were hired killers, eager to work for whichever warlord offered the biggest bucks. They had no need to stand on the edge of a road with a sign reading, "I will assassinate for food." They were skilled at numerous weapons, including the kala and sword.

The next three paragraphs are about the

way Japan, China, and (sneak) the U.S. of A. have invented their own ninja movies. It's important to mention that all three countries are presenting action movies, not historical. True ninjas were assassins, not superheroes or adventurers. The goal of the ninja was to sneak in and kill as quickly as possible, and then get the hell out, not to perform karate, acrobatics, or long drawn out sword fights to avenge his teacher's death.

Their technique, called Shinobi-jutsu (based on the Shinobi clan, one of the ninja groups), is called "Ninjutsu" by Americans and other non-Japanese. Ninjas were not magical, nor were they invincible. Nor are their movies. To me, the ninja films represent the worst subgenre of the martial arts movies because there are way too many ninja movies to review in just one lifetime. I'm eliminating most entries which lack the word "ninja" in their titles. After these next three intros, I'll painstakingly rent & review every ninja film I can get my slimy paws on, and I'm not looking forward to it. You owe me big time for this one, buddy.

## JAPANESE NINJA FLICKS:

Them that Japanese (over in Japan), founders of ninjutsu, are, coincidentally, the founders of the best ninja action films. Since the 1940s, ninjas have appeared in period films, though normally as background henchmen or villains, the heroes of those clean cut years had to be morally-correct Samurai's, not hired killers. If nothing else, the costume dramas of the 1940s & 1950s offered a remotely accurate look at the

1971's **NINJA ARASHI** battles the bad guys!

legends of ninjas. But eventually, the times began to change, and Japanese were ready for 'good' ninjas by the early 1960s.

Ninjas were finally getting more screen time, but their legends were distorted by the influence of comic book superheroes. The B&W TV show **NINJA BUTAI GEKO** (Toei, 1964) had a modern setting, about a team of modern day ninjas who used their swords, guns, shurikens and bombs to fight the bad guys, in what looks like a Japanese prelude to **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE**. Though as exciting as watching ice melt in slow motion, the program was important historically, in that it had the first heroic team of ninjas.

Along with **THE SAMURAI** (another influential 1960s series), it was dubbed in English and released to Australia. By the mid-1960s, these top rated shows had drawn the Aussies into 'ninja fever,' something that we dumb Americans wouldn't encounter until nearly 20 years later! While Australian kiddies collected samurai and ninja trading cards, Japanese producers explored new grounds in cinematic ninjutsu. They incorporated fantasy elements and monsters, resulting in wild forces like **THE MAGIC SERPENT** and **WATARU THE NINJA**. Added excitement indeed, but the facts again got put on a backburner.

One of the more popular ninja hero programs of the 1960s was **KAMEN NO NINJA AKA KAGR** (Toei, 1966), which means, roughly, **MASKED NINJA WITH A RED SHADOW**. This childish fantasy series was full of cheap FX, monsters, impossible feats, and ninjas with more weapons & gadgets than Batman's utility belt. One of the main stars, little boy Yoshihiko Kaneko, also had a similar role in **WATARU THE NINJA**. Because of the international success of this movie (particularly in the Philippines), Toei created English dubbed movies, by piecing together episodes of **MASKED NINJA WITH A RED SHADOW**, now 'dubbed' into Western sequels. The kid looks basically the same in both **WATARU** and the unrelated TV series, so it was no surprise when the series' movies came out as **WATARU: NINJA BOY**, **WATARU THE CONQUEROR**, **WATARU & THE 7 MONSTERS**, **WATARU AND THE FANTASTICS**, and at least three others. These English dubs were never shown in America, but a



There he is, our main man Sonny Chiba as a ninja in **KAGE NO GUNDAN**. Without his influence, this magazine wouldn't exist.

completion called **NINJA SCOPE: THE MAGIC WORLD OF NINJAB** is making the rounds in the bootlegging underground.

In the 1970s, the fantasy/hero ninjas continued, like in the full color **NINJA ARASHI** (Toei, 1972), but the influence of Sonny Chiba, and Chinese kung fu again altered the facts. At this point many ninja films became karate films. (Chiba's **THE EXECUTIONER** is a perfect example, not to mention a perfect movie) even though true ninjas weren't masters of karate, karate wasn't invented until about 300 years after the ninjas were banished by the Shogun.

Chiba's 'karate ninja' concept began to influence the ninja kiddie heroes of TV too, no more period tele's like **NINJA ARASHI** or **LION MARU**. Instead came futuristic heroes like **NINJA CYAPTOR** (Toei, 1978) and **WORLD NINJA WAR: JIRAIYA** (1988).

But not all ninja martial arts films were modern karate actions, the most well known of the 1970s were the many samurai vs. ninja movies, like Chiba's heroic **Jubai Yagyu** movies, and of course, the 'babysat' films (**KOZURE OKAMI**), which painted a different picture of the Yagyu ninjas. These samurai actioners are a little more faithful to the original legends than the superhero fantasies, or the karate ninja genre, but not by far.

Chiba returned as a ninja in the 1980s, along with other protiges, in the TV

series **KAGE NO GUNDAN**. As for personal opinions on Japan's ninja movies, their quality is based on when made. Just as the 1950s and 1960s were a classic phase in Japanese chanbara, thanks to Akira Kurosawa, Hiroshi Inagaki, etc., that's when classic ninja movies were made.

The 1970s marked the downfall in Japanese cinema. There were no classic samurai movies (**SHOGUN ASSASSIN** may be fun, but it's basically a gory trash film in the 1970s, nor were there classic ninja movies. Compare a 1960s ninja movie like **MAGIC SERPENT** or **KIRI GA KURE SAIZO** to later garbage like **NINJA WARS** or **RENEGADE NINJA**, you'll no doubt agree that Japanese 'kiddom's' distaste applies to ninjas too.

Because there's so little English language info on Japanese ninja film, me and August Regone had a hell of a time trying to locate Japanese ninja movies for critical review. However, we came up with a few titles and credits, for ninja freaks to use as a point of reference. Their lack of a rating (no star) doesn't mean it's a bad film, but we never saw it.



Lion man to the rescue, fighting the skull ninjas!



CHINESE NINJA FLICKS

However, in China, ninjas are exclusively the product of the 1970s kung fu movie movement. Than kung fu cheapies were always portraying the Japanese as evil S.O.B.s; whether they were karatekas, judokas or ninjas. The Hong Kongese philosophy was to put a black hood on a Chinese kung fu expert and call him a ninja. With very few exceptions, the Chinese ninja movies were basically just kung fu movies under a different label. An excuse to show Chinese swordsmen waste dozens of Japanese. Most may lack any true ninja facts or historical accuracy, but make up for it in the quality & quantity of their action (outstanding fights are the Chinese trademarks; they can't beat in any genre).

To American audiences the Chinese ninja genre can be described in two words: cut & splice. Chinese movie dudes like Thomas Tang, Joseph Lau, and others were quick to jump on the bandwagon, following the regrettable success of Dudikoff's **AMERICAN NINJA** fiasco. These HK schlocksters quickly re-released Godfrey



Left: Yusuburo Sakaguchi as the heroic Red Shadow in 1985's *KAMEN NO NINJA* aka *KAGE* TV series

Above: The first of ninja reptiles! Ninjas become giant monsters in *MAGIC SERPENT* (Toei, 1988).

He's cheapest 1970s gangster films (usually from places like Thailand) they could find, and re-edited & re-dubbed them into ninja flicks! Caucasian actors like Richard Harrison, Bruce Baron & others were filmed in ninja attire and these various duels were added at random, into the low budget mobster romps, now re-titled **NINJA: AMERICAN WARRIOR**, **NINJA: THE PROTECTOR**, **EMPIRE OF THE SPIRITUAL NINJA**, **NINJA SQUAD**, **NINJA DEATH SQUAD**, **NINJA DRAGON**, **CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA**, **NINJA'S EXTREME WEAPONS**, **RAGE OF A NINJA** and **ULTIMATE NINJA** (two of the better ones).

Viewing these complex shenanigans is a horrendous experience, they're confusing, with bad continuity, way too many characters, stupid dialogue and nothing to do with ninjas in their original cuts. Seeing any one of them is a schizophrenic experience, you're watching at least two stories at once. 1. The main filer is Chinese triad nonsense, gunplay, melodrama, romance, nudity, a little kung fu, and 'but still dubbing 2. Random cut-and-paste Caucasian ninja duels. Filmed in Korea, all of Richard Herne's scenes were done at once, making him think it was just one movie. The films have ninjas with super powers: they 'quick change', explode, WALK UP trees, and in one of them, a ninja 'magio flute' controls the actions of snakes, so they'll attack the villains!

Otherwise, the martial arts, acrobatics and swordplay in these shots are good, though it's obvious that HK stuntmen double for the westerners once their ninja suits magically materialize.

#### AMERICAN NINJA FLICKS

As mumbled earlier, them Aussies had a head start on the rest of us non-Asians, but ninjutsu gained the international spotlight in 1987, when Sean Connery teamed up with Tetsuro Tanba for **YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE**. Set in Japan, it had James Bond working out with ninjas (attired in white karate gis) while they did target practice with (pistols) who, when in battle, bear a striking resemblance to those in **NINJA BUTAI GEKKO** ("Phantom Agents" in Australia). This was the first example of a westernized ninja film, and five years later, David Carradine fought a ninja in **KUNG FU**.

The next major damage occurred in around 1984, when **THE KILLER ELITE**, America's first real ninja movie, showed its ugly head. It starred James Caan, and was a horrendously dull piece of shit, made by morons who can't tell the difference between Japanese and Chinese cultures & arts.

Sometime in the late 1970s (I think), there was even a ninja episode of **CHIPS**. If nothing else, the American ninja movies did not get better. They did, not that there was any way it could go lower.

In 1980, Chuck Norris dealt with ninjas in **THE OCTAGON**, which, if nothing else, was better than **KILLER ELITE**. By the time **ENTER THE NINJA** (with Franco Nero) came out in around 1981, it was confirmed that cinematic ninjutsu was the next 'big thing'. You all know my complaints against

*Background photo: Scene from ENTER THE NINJA, the There gives the neighbor hood of ninja films. After the craze came numerous other U.S. media ninja faves.*

American martial arts stars. We attacked them many times before. Again, the action scenes in movies like ENTER THE NINJA and the notorious AMERICAN NINJA film are terrible, and the more I see them, I dislike most American filming techniques & scripts explains my resentment toward them, Bouck said. But the likes of KILLER ELITE, AMERICAN NINJA, and ENTER THE NINJA proved that the damn yankees have discovered a new form of quick buck exploitation film. Simply get some idiot to wear a black hood regardless of athletic capacity, and you get a hit film. So the demand for ninja films was easily filled; today, you can't go into video stores and not see more U.S. media ninja films than there are hairy legs in a women's restroom in San Francisco. Or, I guess.

As mentioned earlier, most of these 'American' ninja flicks are actually cheapies out of China, re-edited, retitled, and sometimes given new footage to 'Americanize' them. But of any U.S. ninja series, the most successful movies are of course the infamously terrible *Turtle* fassoes. Based on comic books and cartoons, they at least have decent budgets and nice battles, putting them ahead of your average AMERICAN NINJA ripoff. The high point of them is their fight scenes, performed by HK stunt teams from Golden Harvest.

Another popular film series, mentioned a few sentences ago, was the AMERICAN NINJA films of the '80s. The AMERICAN NINJA films, which I'll soon review quite unhappily, are an excellent example of just how bad an American martial arts film can get. They're all average budgeted and have the usual trademarks of U.S. adventures & crime dramas: like gun play, explosions, car chases, stupid jokes and predictable clichés. All feature dozens of ninja soldiers at unrealistic training camps, hired by some central villain not trained in ninjutsu. They are both lame & dumb; not much blood or strong language, no nudity. These look like TV movies. They also have subtitles I don't recall.

For example, one of the full titles is AMERICAN NINJA #3: BLOOD HUNT. Why this title? Nobody hunts for blood, though Steve James is black, so maybe it's a racial slur.

But the two most familiar faces in the U.S. ninja genre are Tadashi Yamashita and Sho Kosugi. While Yamashita had a background in Asian film long before his ninja days, Sho Kosugi seems to be a product of the U.S. ninja cinema, despite his Japanese

accent (or maybe he was big in Japan at one time, I don't know). Not only has he gotten stuck in numerous ninja films, but released his own line of videotapes, called NINJA THEATRE where he hosts, and performs in videotaped ninja duels (though the films are average HK chop sockeys, few involve ninjas).

Kosugi was also the main heavy in THE MASTER, the TV show re-released in-colors as the MASTER NINJA series. Is it my imagination, or does Sho wear a lot of eyeliner?

WHAT THE LETTERS (AFTER THE TITLES) MEAN (A) - American movie; and most likely a bad one. (C) - Chinese movie, usually a kung fu/worldwide thriller. (J) - Japanese movie, various genres included.

A LIFE OF NINJA (C) - Were it not for its blatant disregard for animals (snake and goldfish brutally killed on film), this would be one awesome movie. It's fun though, one minute lady ninjas mud-wrestle, and later, Chen Kwan Tai is body slammed, over and over, by a Japanese wrestler. The climax has rival ninjas Chen Kwan Tai & Yasuaki Kureta fighting at a beautiful set (caverns and statues). Major fun for ninja kung fu freaks! \*\*\*

AMERICAN NINJA (A) - Michael Dudikoff as a ninja who investigates corruption on a military base in this lame force. He gets a chance to defeat Steve James and Tedashi Yamaishi, even though his fighting skill rivals that of a ladybug. \*

AMERICAN NINJA 2 (A) - Better than the first, as though THAT'S any major accomplishment. Michael Dudikoff, Steve James and some Marines rid an island nation of genetically altered ninjas, via poor fight. \*

AMERICAN NINJA 3 (A) - Dudikoff is out, David Bradley (the only hero in this series capable of kicking) is in. He, Steve James & some Asian lady with a nice ass fight villains on a ship. \*

AMERICAN NINJA 4 (A) - Michael Dudikoff is back, helping David Bradley & Ken Gampu (LASER MISSION, KILL and KILL AGAIN, GODS MUST BE CRAZY) to waste ninjas & Arabs in Africa. \*

AMMUNITION AND AMBITION (J) - [DAI KESSEN, aka THE GRAND BATTLE] Toho's 1968 actioner about legendary shogun spy Hattori Hanzo, starring Hiroki Matsukata. Part of the BAND OF ASSASSINS series.

BAND OF ASSASSINS (J) - aka ASSASSINS, NINJA HAY (SHINOBI NO MONO) 1963-1968. Reizo Ichikawa plays anti-hero ninjas in this series of long lost adventures.

BAND OF NINJA (J) - Little is known about this 1987 film, though screen writer Mamoru Sakai wrote scripts for ULTRAMAN, ULTRASEVEN, and even IRON KING, so it had to be good!

BLACK NINJA (J) - Hiroki Matsukata. In another Toho movie from 1967.

EMPIRE OF THE SPIRITUAL NINJA (C) - Bottom-of-the-barrel bought from Bangkok featuring mixed footage from at least two different films. Some shots of Americans others of ninjas, mostly about Thai celebrities, ridiculous dubbing.

ESCAPE FROM HELL (J) - [MUSHI-KU NINBETSU-CHO] Directed by Katsuji Inoue and reviewed by nobody (I haven't seen it). It's a 1963 film from Shochiku.

FEMALE ASSASSIN NINJA TECHNIQUE (J) - Tokushinsha's 1981-1983 "e-60" ninja films. Starring Miki Mizuno and Maki Mizuno. Japanese title: KUNIBCHE NINPO-CHO.

CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA (C) - Talk about mixed marriages! Liu Chia-Hua as a kung fu who marries a female ninja. In the battle-of-the-boxes, battle-of-martial arts, action/comedy from Shaw Bros. With OG's video villain, Yasuaki Kunte. See OG's \*\*\*

CHALLENGE THE NINJA (C) - Superhero hero well-recognized movie, this one of the Liukengtao, Seemi Joseph Lin edited Bruce Banner into another Godfrey Ho take out of Thailand. Bruce Banner's scenes as a ninja add unintentional humor, but our Thais' Jackie training" date not. Amazing stunts, fight galore. All the same fronts like place at the same picnic table as in ULTIMATE NINJA. \*\*

COMMANDO; THE NINJA (C) - Shot on tape, it's derived from some TV series, set in modern times. Meng Fei岐岐 to search of Tanaka's secret formula, encountering mobsters, Americans, babies, and a dog. Total suture-type! Dull moments. Two moments. \*\*\*1/2

CRIMSON SHADOW (J) - Toho 1962 aka REVENGER IN THE SHADOW (AKAI KAGEBOSHI), directed by Shigenobu Ozawa.

CUT THAT SHADOW (J) - [KAGE-O KIRU] 1962; Daisi Dr Kazuo Ikehiko

DAREDEVIL IN THE CASTLE (J) - Toho's rarely seen 1961 drama, starring Toehiro Mifune, Kyoko Kagawa, Yunko Hoshi, & Akiko Hiramatsu. Yet another movie about the destruction of the Gokka Castle.

ENTER THE NINJA (A) - This average actioner got America's ninja craze rolling, unfortunately Stars Franko Nero, whoever

that is."

**EXECUTIONER (J)** - Called JIGOKU KEN ("Hell Fist") in Japan, this '74 Sonny Chiba thriller is a masterpiece of karate, sleptick & ninjutsu. Chiba, Makoto Seta & Yosuke Kurata are at their best, in a tale of a Koge ninja battling the yakuza. OC14. \*\*\*\*

**HEIBATSU, THE (J)** - Bizarre! Weird! A zany, satirical chanbara about samurai's and ninjas, rivals who team up to battle foreign devils lead by Mr. Brown, who ride bicycles while firing machine guns. Heroic ninjas fight back with ninjutsu, inflatable frogs and a jet-pack made of bamboo! It's a comedy, spoofing who-knows-what, and with a silly musical score! \*\*

**LIVING BY THE SWORD (J)** - Nikkatsu made this one, originally called KAGE-O KIRU-KEN ["The Shadow Killing Sword"] in 1967. Hidetaka Takehashi again typecast as a heroic ninja, but seemed to disappear after the early 1970s.

**KILL THE NINJA (C)** - Poor lighting (bad video transfer!) ruins what could have been a fun thriller. Huang Cheng Li, a Korean and a ninja fight for a Buddha statue. Great music and fight; fun despite a dark, washed-out look. \*\*

**KIRI GA KURE SAIZO (J)** - A B&W, 1964 drama from Daiei featuring a recognizable Akira Ifukube score. Decent ninja action for its time, back when Japanese chanbara was still in its 'classic' phase. No English dubbing or subtitles, but something to do with

Tokugawa's reign and the attack on Oosaka Castle. \*\*

**MAGIC OF THE NINJA (J)** - Evil Skull Ninjas battle the superhero Lion Man in this rarely seen English dubbing of LION MARU's pilot episode. \*\*\*

**MAGIC SERPENT (J)** - Dubbed in English & still shown on TV occasionally, this 1988 Toei fantasy introduced many of us to ninjas, while dazzling us with magic and giant monsters! The monster roars were supplied by Toho, sounding ridiculously familiar. Hiroki Matsukata as a righteous ninja out for revenge. \*\*\*

**MASKED NINJA WITH A RED SHADOW (J)** - Heroic Red Shadow (Yusuburo Sekiguchi) battles demons & giant monsters, with help from sidekick Blue Shadow (Yoshinobu Kaneko) in this 52-part kiddie series from 1968. \*\*

**MASTER [aka MASTER NINJA] (A)** - Lee Van Cleef? Vince Van Patten? TV-made ninjutsu from the early 1980s, the show was short-lived, despite Sho Kosugi's attempts toiven things up as the villain. \*

**MIRAI NINJA (J)** - It translates in English as 'Future Ninja', also known as WARLORD. By the time you read this, there might be an American theatrical club called CYBER NINJA. A spectacular superhero/sci-fi thriller under any title. Beautiful FX and great battles abound! Monsters! Swordplay! \*\*\*

**MISSION: IRON CASTLE (J)** - Gemere regular Kojiro Hongo in another Daiei film.

However, former Toei '60s star Hiroki Matsukata also appears in this 1970 movie I've yet to see, or review properly.

**NIGHT OF THE NINJA (C)** - Wei Ping Ao and other gangsters went a stolen diamond. Meanwhile, an American battles ninjas. Haven't we been here before?

**9 1/2 NINJAS (A)** - Bewilderingly terrible attempt to satirize erotic thrillers and ninja films. It fails miserably on both accounts, despite the lead actress's excellent bod.

**NINJA AND THE THREE SISTERS (J)** - Shingo Yamashiro in a 1961 drama from Toei. Never seen it, but its Japanese title is NINJUTSU-TSUKAI TO SAN NIN MUSUME, which means 'Ninja Master and the Three Sisters' (a more correct translation than the title).

**NINE DEATHS OF THE NINJA (A)** - Ninja Sho Kosugi and an American soldier tracking drug traffickers in the Philippines, encountering Americans, Arabs, Germans, sexy babes, and very few Filipinos. The fight, like the music, look like that of a TV movie, and it's nonstop stupidity from start-to-finish. From the beginning credits (Sho doing a 'sword-dance' in the mist with female dancers) to its pointless, lackluster ending, this piece of shit has no logic, continuity, rationale, rhyme or reason, and has no reason for being. Sho's sons, Kane & Shane appear, they've been in about three of his films.

**NINJA ACADEMY (A)** - I'd say this silly farce



*Left: Nothing else, America's NINJA TURTLE movies, cartoons and comics, redefined the U.S.'s definition of a ninja. Are they Japanese assassins or intrepid reptiles who eat pizza? That's the mystery of the ninja.*

*Right: Turtle Barroca, TV's original Ninja Turtle? This villain (from KAMEN RIDER VS; 1972) wreaked havoc on Japanese TV long before Americans discovered how to make martial arts reptiles!*



is better than POLICE ACADEMY, but that would be redundant, and I've never seen POLICE ACADEMY. NINJA ACADEMY is a goofy story of people learning ninjutsu for stupid reasons. Sefical characters from all walks of life encounter gags, breasts, and a climactic showdown with a rival ninja school. \*\*

NINJA: AMERICAN WARRIOR (C) - A pretty detective. Amazona, avenges Chi Kwan Chun's death, while a white ninja has Vietnam flashbacks involving a Rutger Hauer wannabe. \*\*

NINJA DEATH SQUAD (C) - Some yankee in a ninja gi, spliced into a cheap crime dremel! How many more times am I going to have to say this? I just rented and watched this one, but have no memory of it!

NINJA DRAGON (C) - Blame Joseph Lai & Godfrey Ho for casting Richard Harrison (FOUR ASSASSINS, FIREBACK, BLOODY AVENGERS) as an American ninja. More mindom ninja fights, indescribably edited into a Shanghai gangster drama about guns, girls & gore.

• Jackie alone avenging his elderly master's death against Japanese ninjas. The 1983 actioner serves as a halfway point between genres, from 1970s chop sockey to Tsui Hark fantasies, so it's important historically. But I don't expect any of you jeded Herk freaks to see this influential movie, assholes. \*\*\*

NINJA MISSION (S) - Swedish ninja movie; Sweden is not known for its ninja movies, and NINJA MISSION shows why. Yet somewhat realistic and accurate for a ninja flick, as these ninja swedes prefer modern wea-



Animated  
version of  
Toei's  
KAMEN NO  
NINJA  
aka KAGE  
(Masked  
Ninja  
with a  
Red  
Shadow).

NINJA ARASHI (J) - A 1972 TV series about animal-ninjas way ahead of their damn turtles! Low budget, crude, talky, infantile, and yet entertaining. Our bird-like hero takes on demons, ninjas, mutants, Frankenstein and anyone else he doesn't like. See below. \*\*

NINJA BUTAI GEKO (J) - Aussies know this early 80s series as "Phantom Agents," in its dreggish English dubbing. With Akira Yameguchi and a catchy, James Bond-ish theme song, otherwise pretty dull. See OCCII. \*

NINJA IN THE CLAWS OF THE CIA (C) - No ninjas, nor is there logic. Never liked John Liu, & this spy flick did little to change that. Liu flees corrupt CIA agents while boning every babe from Mexico to France. Bewilderingly stupid, but never dull! Nice kung fu kicks through out. \*1/2

NINJA IN THE DRAGON'S DEN (C) - Hiroyuki Sanada and Constance Lee team up to fight the bad guys. Not bad at all. \*\*

NINJA KIDS (C) - No kids, plenty of fights, obscenities, brothels, & nudity. A chop sockeyer of the 'drunken master' genre, with

pony like guns & time bombs. Despite an attractive female pop singer lead (upper muddy), it's a horrendously dull saga about agents battling the KGB. NINJA MISSION proves I'm no inconniac.

NINJA'S EXTREME WEAPONS (C) - Thomas Tang must be stopped! Yet again he's spliced red, white & blue ninjas into a Thai gangster fiasco. Callan, a hero from SOUL OF BRUCE LEE stars, and an interesting twist is that the blue ninja, not the white one is the hero.

NINJA CYAPTOR (J) - Toei again thrills

superhero fans in this 43-episode TV show about high-tech warriors battling magic ninjas, and starring KIKAIWA's Dersuke Ban \*\*\*

**NINJA SQUAD** (C) - Richard Harrison, in a colorful ninja suit, again in a terrible gangster drama from Thailand or the Philippines. The multi colored ninjas all wear headbands which read 'NINJA' in big friendly letters! Their accessories from store-bought Halloween costumes! Music in this unintentional comedy would later appear in **HARDBOILED**, proving that even John Woo likes stock music.

**NINJA: THE FINAL DUEL II** (C) - Low budget Taiwanese masterpiece! Never saw part 1, but if it's anything like this sequel, it's a wild chop sockey/fantasy with ninjas, Shaolin monks, swordsmen, Caucasian heroes aiding the Chinese kung fuens, lamas, bronzenmen, and 99% action!! It wasn't until 45 minutes into this thriller that I realized it had no English translation of any kind (not much dialogue). \*\*\*

**NINJA: THE PROTECTOR** (C) - Joseph Lai again splices Caucasian ninja, Richard Harrison into a bad choice of a story! A HK sleaze film featuring a few decent laughs (i.e. Jackie Chan's name in the credits, unbeknownst to him).

**NINJA TERMINATOR** (C) - No ninjas, no Terminator. Instead, vengeful Chin Sing pursues Chen Hui Min in this early 1970s chop sockey tale with an urban setting. Too talky, despite occasional fights and T&A. \*1/2

**NINJA 3: THE DOMINATION** (A) - Sho Kosugi isn't necessarily a bad fighter, but the film tries to rip off **FLASHDANCE**, instead of being a good martial arts film. Something to do with an aerobics teacher possessed by a ninja's ghost.

**NINJA TURF** (A) - No ninjas in this low budget tale of Chinese immigrants (Jun Chong, Phi Rhee) battling various gangs. Excellent fights are ruined by poor lighting (way too dark!) and a depressing ending. Bill Wallace cameoed as a villain. \*\*

**NINJA WARLORD** (C) - No ninjas, but plenty of evil Japanese and kung fu hero Chen Sing to the rescue. \*\*

**NINJA WARRIOR** (A) - Not bad for a low budget movie, and looks like a HK cheapie. The sound FX are from Chinese films, but the fights are slower, though photographed better than average for a US production. Story deals with ninjas, kidnapping and a secret formula. \*\*

**NINJA WARS** (A) - When I said Japan makes the best ninja films, I hadn't seen this worthless heap of boredom from Toei. Sorry Chiba again plays a Yagyu ninja

(minus the trademark eyepatch), and Hiroyuki Sanada stars. A couple nice decorations, and inventive gimmicks, yet whoever wrote the period film's script must have been on acid. Bizarre, offbeat, overly talky utter garbage, makes me respect Dudikoff's films.



An early naga from Japanese TV.

**NOBLE NINJA** (C) - An early 1970s film influenced by 1960s period films, but with more polished sword fights. There's a team of mighty sword women, and Pai Ying plays a hero for once! Epic sword slaughter as our heroes Yueh Hwa & Pai Ying tear up the town! Lo Lieh cameo, ninjas don't. \*\*\*

**PHOENIX THE NINJA** (C) - Pearl Chong in another delightful period movie, as she searches for her parents' murderer. The

climactic duel between her and a bad monk takes place inside a volcano! Best of all, not a naga in sight! \*\*\*

**PLOT OF THE YAGYU CLAN** (J) - Yet another tale of Yagyu ninjas, from 1978

**PREY FOR DEATH** (A) - If you ever decide to watch a Sho Kosugi movie (and one is more than enough), make it this one. Brutal, gory, acrobatic, and a tale of Sho and his son Kane Kosugi (who'd later grow up to play the main hero in **ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO**) coming to America, only to get harassed by mobsters. Check out Sho's fancy headgear in the climactic free-for-all. That's what I call 'Sho & tell'! \*1/2

**RAGE OF A NINJA** (C) - It's the old 'spliceroo' again, but at least THIS time, there really are ninjas, even in the original version! But that didn't stop Caucasian ninjas from getting edited in at random. These stupid yankees want us to know they're ninjas, so they too wear the 'Ninja' headbands! The pink one is the hero! They all 'quick change' in a puff of smoke, one explodes, another turns into a frog! Dumb fun, and sexy babes too, in what is actually an erotic, romantic love story! Music seems to be stolen from some old New Order album. \*\*

**RENEGADE NINJA** (J) - Hiroki Matsukata (hero of **MAGIC SERPENT**) plays the man good guy, Yorozuya Kinosuke (hero in **COZURE OKAMI** TV series) plays the bad guy, and Hiroyuki Sanada, Shoji Kobayashi & Tetsuro Tanba appear. A Toei movie from 1979. All the markings of a fun film, right? Wrong! Even dubbed in English, this is a long, talky, confusing saga. One minute, there's a meteor crashing on Earth, and later, a castle flies in the air. Why? So much is unexplained, and there are way too many characters to keep track of, and the battles suck. \*

**REVENGE OF THE NINJA** (A) - One of the USA's better attempts, which isn't saying much. Sho Kosugi and his son discover somebody is smuggling drugs in antiques. Actually, the whole film is more than similar to the 'semi-remake', **PRAY FOR DEATH**. \*1/2

**RETURN OF THE NINJA KIDS** (C) - Ninjas no, kids yes, video-gamed title yes, typical chop sockey yes, Jackie ripoff yes. \*1/2

**ROBOT NINJA** (A) - Perhaps the worst movie ever made, made by people who don't know jackshit about ninjas or how to make a proper Japanese superhero. Some cheap, bad films are at least unintentionally funny, but not this super dull heap of crap, despite a cameo by Burt Ward.

**SAMURAI SPY** (J) - A 1965 effort from Schachiku, rarely seen outside of Japan, with Koj Takahashi and Tetsuro Tanba



The 'Space Ninjas' of the MESSAGE FROM SPACE TV series.

Features the famous ninja Barutobi, a folk hero.

**SASUKE AND HIS COMEDIANS** (J) [SANADA FUJINROKU] A 1963 direction from Tai Kata, from Toei, involving rebel ninjas of the Sanada clan. Ain't seen it.

**SECRET AGENT SWORDSMAN** (J) [aka THE SEARCHING SWORDSMAN] Feature-length version of Australia's THE SAMURAI TV series, known in Japanese as ONNITSU KENSHI. Cast Koichi Ose, Jun Fujimaki, and Bin Amatsu; from Senkousha Productions.

**SHOGUN'S NINJA** (J) Though influenced by Chinese kung fu films, this Toei adventure maintains the usual boredom seen in other Japanese period films. But still, any fight involving Sonny Chiba, Hiroyuki Sanada & Etsuko Shiomi can't be all bad. \*

**SECRET OF THE FLYFLOT** (J) - Never mind, I haven't seen or heard of this Toei '68 tale, also called SHINODI NO MANJI and MANJI OF THE ASSASSIN.

**SNAKEFIST NINJA** (C) - Cheaply, inaccurately retitled print of Jackie Chan's SNAKEFIST FIGHTER. No ninjas, and the video box says: "Starring Yaakoo Chan"\*\*

**STEEL FACES LURKING IN THE DARKNESS** (J) - Junji Kurata directed Tomisaburo Wakayama in this Toei '1961' film, before going on to direct MASKED NINJA WITH A RED SHADOW six years later

**SUPER NINJAS** (C) - Chang Cheh's epic slasher fest. Nonstop swordplay, blood & gore as Chinese guys take on the Five

Element Ninjas. Wild stuff. \*\*\*

#### S U R F NINJA (A)

Rarely do I review a movie I've never seen, but in this case I'll make an exception.

#### TEEN-AGE

M U T A N T NINJA TURTLES (A) - They started out as comic books in the early 1980s, then became a cartoon. Their biggest hit was their three live action movies. I

hated the first one so much I avoided the remainder of the trilogy. As for the cartoon, I saw its feature-length pilot many years ago, and was relieved that the names of the weapons were pronounced correctly (none of this 'munchuck', or 'chocko stick' bullshit) \*

**TENGU IN THE GALE** (J) - aka HAUNTED SAMURAI, SUPERMAN OF THE GALE, & KAZE NO TENGU. Yet another Hideki Takahashi vehicle.

A 1971 movie from Nikkatsu, and featuring up & coming KAMEN RIDER 2 Takeru Sato.

#### ULTIMATE

NINJA (C) - Them 'ninja' headbands sure get around, every ninja needs one! Bruce (DRAGON FORCE) Baron's turn up at bat - I mean, up at sword, as a red ninja battling black ninjas over \*

small ninja statue resembling a GI Joe doll. Meanwhile, in an unrelated event, Thai gangsters battle it out in forests & bamboo villages! Action packed with great dialogue: "Those prick! I'll get even, once I've learned kung fu!" Fights a' plenty, and Japanese superhero fans will recognize music taken from KAMEN RIDER SUPER 1. \*\*\*

**UNMASKING THE IDOL** (A) - Big budget adventure comedy, a silly spy story showing what would happen if James Bond were a ninja. Outlandish, most bordering as silly/fantasy. The fights are fairly good, as heroic ninjas battle red enemy ninjas at their island fortress. There's a hilarious baboon who steals the film! Stars Ian Hunter (no, not the one from Mott the Hoople) \*\*

**WARRIOR AND THE NINJA** (I) - Ninjutsu meets Indian mysticism in this gory, inventive fantasy from Jakarta, Indonesia. Its original title is BAJING IRENG DAN JAKA SEMBUNG and looks like 'The Jungle Book meets Five Deadly Venoms', and it's interesting how Indonesian period films combine Chinese & Middle Eastern cultures. The kung fu hero in none other than Barry Prima, who played Barney (dubbed like Elvin) is FEARLESS FEMALE FREEDOM FIGHTERS, proving that it too is Indonesian, NOT Filipino as I was told! The story is unique, despite obligatory Caucasian villains: it's all about this female assassin called the Black Squirrel, a ninja like Robin Hood who helps Barry Prima defeat foreign devils and swordsmen. Acrobatic Miniatures! Clever! FX! Tons of fight!\*\*\*

**WATARI-THE GRAND NINJA MOVIE** (J) - (continued on page 28)

High-tech ninjas in NINJA CYAPTOR.



# HONG KONG HEROES: NEW AND OLD

In the sleazeflash fanzine community, reviews of current Chinese hits are as commonplace as *dkks* performing in professional women's Tennis. So I'm eliminating OC's short-lived column, *MODERN HEROES OF HONG KONG*, because it's too trendy if every item goes hound and degenerate is going to suddenly start writing about John Woo, Jackie Chan & Tsui Hark. I see no reason to contribute heavily to these overrated fads. There are Hong Kong film festivals and "Hong Kong Night" at theaters all over the country; the genre has really taken off. Personally, I'll never again go into a domestic theater full of trendy art types, to see a HK movie. I'll stick to the Chinatown theaters. I'll take the Chinese audience over pretentious American trannies any day. But of course, OC won't completely ignore any genre, but for now, the new will share space with the old. This column combines *CHOP SOOKY REPORT* with *MODERN HEROES OF HONG KONG*. Sure, I'll occasionally cover Tsui Hark & the likes, but I'll include the oldies too.

I like Chinese cinema from four different decades: the sword fantasies of the 1960s, the kung fu movies of the 1970s, the gangster dramas of the 1980s, and whatever is the new trend of the 1990s (a return to King Fu-inspired swordfights, I suspect). Last issue I suspected that the 1990s trend in HK is a return to period fantasies. My more recent trips to Chinatown confirmed my disappointment. Used to be I'd go into Chinatown to see movies at random, whatever was playing; I'd seen genres come and go. But ever since *ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA* came out, that's all that seems to be playing! I'm the one human on Earth who dislikes that film (and many other Hark flicks), so unlike the rest of you, I've no interest in the overrated movie's assorted sequels, remakes, spinoffs, prequels and ripoffs. Yet I enjoy going into Chinatown theaters, the subtitles are much more readable than on a videotape. So I'm force-feeding myself the period fantasies of the 1990s. I'd rather watch a cop & gangster film, but that genre is dying out (possibly a political move, since cops and gangsters may become obsolete in 1997 when the Commies impose new threats). So off I go to Chinatown, choosing between different Huang Fei Hung movies, dreading which theater to go into to be bored.

On a recent trip, the Great Star was showing some pomo film, and the World

Theater was showing a Huang Fei Hung ripoff, but no co-feature looked like a musical. So I chose the tried-and-true Pagoda Theater, at least they were showing a couple of action fantasies: *ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA IV* (\*\*) and *THE WIFE WITH WHITE HAIR* (\*\*). I reluctantly coughed up my six bucks as I entered, miffed that I've seen every film in the *ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA* series, and that, out of desperation will get stuck sitting through more. Part 4 confirms my suspicion of what the first movie did; it killed the kung fu fun.

The kung fu genre really started in the 1960s, thanks to old timers like Jimmy Wang Yu and Yueh Hwa. The kung fu film reached revolutionary new levels in the 1970s, thanks to Bruce Lee, Raymond Chow, Fu Shang and others. In the 1980s, the kung fu film again took on a new form, and the fights and stunts reached their peak. Impossible to improve on the 1980s work, the 1990s adventures virtually ignore martial arts. Seems all the post-*ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA* forces prefer elaborate FX, suspension wires, trick photography, impossible feats, and over-done acrobats over real kung fu. Ironically, these gimmicks were popular in the 1960s, too, but back then, it was an excuse to hide the fact that the actors can't fight for shit! But what's the excuse for the 1990s films using the arty tartsy stuff? Jet Li and Yuen Biao know how to fight! Their skills only occasionally shine out, amid the endless wire-FX and deceitful camera work.

Regardless, I took a dose of caffeine to keep me awake during the 4th chapter in the story of China's oldest, and most famous folk hero since the Monkey King: Huang Fei Hung. Among the endless dialogue & clowning around seemed to be a simple story, but in typical Harkian style, it was made to look like a complex story, via endless rambling. Huang Fei Hung battles a group of female revolutionaries who kill foreign devils, even the innocent ones. Speaking of foreigners, there's the competitive 'lion dance', an arena where different teams get in huge animal costumes and props, which look like parade floats. In reality, I think only the Chinese preformed in these large dragon, tiger and lion costumes. In this film it seems that most countries, including Germany and America are doing it too! So various big dragons, monsters and animals (all made of wood and paper mache) dance around and battle it out, in what reminded me of the 'car wrestling'

episode of *SPEED RACER*. These humongous statuettes/costumes contain deadly weapons like swords and spears, to damage the animals & people of competing countries. One of these creatures roars like General Porgieless, thanks to Huang Fei Hung, the Chinese team wins, of course. Slightly better was its co-feature, *THE WIFE WITH WHITE HAIR* (\*\*).

Like the Coming Attractions which preceded it, it's another ultra-typical costume drama. A magical fantasy more than similar to *A CHINESE GHOST STORY*. *WIFE WITH WHITE HAIR* tells the story of a swordman who falls in love with the priestess of an evil cult. Our hero tries to free her of her involvement with these bizarre freaks, resulting in gore, a little swordplay, FX, acrobats and average fun.

Many of you horny, tat couch potatoes are asking for more info and shots of Hong Kong's many gorgeous actresses. So among the usual reviews of films, I'll include random biographies, to help you identify these beauties of the East. The bios presented are based on info available, and are not in anyway related to the chosen film reviews. But if you're using photos as a substitute for getting a real girlfriend, I don't want to hear about it. Believe it or not, getting a girlfriend is not impossible, assuming you're willing to lose weight and clean yourself up. I for one have never gone to bed with an ugly girl. However, I've woken up with quite a few

## SATANIC CRYSTALS

*Presented by Entertainment Ltd., 1988*  
*Director: Tommy Cheng, Producer: Delta Young, Executive Producer: Thomas Tang, Starting: Liang Kai Yam (Liang Chai Jen), Fung Shui On, Ching Tao, Cheng Key Ying, Sung Kwei On, Ng Man Tat, Sing Fu On, Ho Chi Chun, Yung Sui Kit, Suan Kin, Y Chi Wei, George Nicholas, Christopher Kipper, Lam Lai Ying, Chung Suet Wing*

So there I was, in a Chinese video store I hadn't visited in six pleasant, peaceful months. You see, I momentarily 'outgrew' Hong Kong films once somebody from ROLLING STONE wrote to me, requesting info on HK's newer films. If a magazine THAT mainstream is gonna' write about HK flicks, I wanted nothing to do with them. But after a while, the addiction returned; I needed my fix of HK action, overrated or not! But once in the store I couldn't decide what to rent. I knew damn sure I wouldn't touch anything with Jet Lee in it, or anything remotely

resembling CHINESE GHOST STORY. Jackie Chan is past his prime, Steven Chow is as funny as Jerry Lewis. So I managed to locate an obscure little adventure called SATANIC CRYSTALS.

I closed my eyes, put my hand on a row of tapes, and chose this one at random. Liang Chia Jen (spelled differently in the credits), who's been in THUNDERING MANTIS, FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH, TAK MORI: ORIGINATOR OF KUNG FU, and RED SHIELD, stars as a Chinese adventurer in search of rare jewels in Bangkok. He bangs cocks in Bangkok, fighting various soldiers, tribes and other villains, all after the so-called "satanic" crystals (there's nothing satanic about them, it's all just another war/action movie). It has all the ingredients of a good adventure, gore, brutality, T&A, stunts, stabbings, kung fu, explosions, and more shoot outs than beards at a sci-fi convention. All this amounts to standard, average, two-star material. But them dick lickers forgot to add English subtitles! The credits are in English, proving they want non-Chinese to know all their names, but they don't care if we understand the story. Egomaniacs!

ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS;  
BLOOD OF THE JAGUAR

Produced by Entertainment Co. in 1983. Starring Leung Ki Fai (Tony Leung, but not the one from BULLET IN THE HEAD), Joey Wang, Wu Ma

I never thought I'd like a Tsui Hark-inspired, wire FX period film, not after ONCE

UPON A TIME IN CHINA PART 74, ONCE UPON A TIME IN HONG KONG, FUNG SAI YUK, or any other Huang Fei Hung fiasco! That's about as likely as finding a fanatical pro-lifer who minds his own business. But since this title hints it might be

a decent, fairly amusing period film with epic production values, and ONLY ONCE did Joey Wang fight by using roles of streaming toilet paper!

As you can tell from the title, it again involves mountain bandits, but concentrates

more on the governmental soldiers who fight them. It all starts when the general's snobby son is rescued from a bandit clan. Turns out he'd have been better off left in their cage, since once he's free, the egotistical son goes around using diplomatic immunity to get away with rape and harassment. A drunken monk and scholar/soldier prevent his drunken attacks on townsfolk, so he conspires with a mail soldier to fire our two heroes. Both are sent into exile, and plan to go join the patriotic mountain bandits. But back at the palace, Joey Wang's character (wife of the heroic swordsman) gets killed by the rich kid (a botched rape attempt), resulting in the inevitable duel.

There's blood, swordplay, high flying leaps, explosions, and impossible acrobats all achieved with suspension wires all through this battle, as well as the rest of this confusing, frequently dull story. My script may lack details, because I don't want to spend the rest of this life writing this article. Our two heroes win their fight, though they get screwed up pretty badly too."

#### RAPED BY AN ANGEL

[Chinese title: HO FA CHANG JEN, which means "Legal Rape"] Producer Wong Jing (AKA Wong Chang), Director Lu

## ニナ・リー NINA LEE / 利智 aka NINA LI CHIH

Year of birth: 1965  
Place of birth: Shanghai  
Educated in HK, England and San Francisco. Nina Li Chih later won a beauty contest in HK, starting her film career.

ACES GO PLACES 5: THE TERRACOTTA HIT ('88)\*\*\*  
CRIMINAL HUNTER ('87)  
PEDICAB DRIVER ('88)\*\*  
CHINESE GHOST STORY 3 ('91)\*\* 1/2  
DRAGON FROM RUSSIA ('90)\*\*\*\*  
TIGER ON BEAT ('88)\*\*\*  
PROFILES OF PLEASURE ('88)\*



Below: Nina Li Chih (middle), with Pauline Wong (left), and Connie Lau (right); the cast of PROFILES OF PLEASURE ('88).



related to the old novel "The Water Margin," related to 7 BLOWS OF THE DRAGON, I thought I'd give it a try. So I got plenty of caffeine in my system (Hak-ah films require consciousness and accuracy to follow the chaotic stories), and entered the Great Star, Chinatown's filthiest theater. What I saw was

Wai Chung, Presented By Wong Jing's Workshop, Ltd, Cast Cho Su Chien, Yin Deo Hui (Simon Yam), Wu Shek Ling, Dong Hui Hui.

Normally I avoid erotic thrillers like a politician avoids giving a direct answer, but since the ads showed a sexy girl with a crossbow [hence this issue's cover, though she never looks like that in the film itself] I expected an action film. Granted, there are a couple of fights, like Simon Yam fighting off a gang of mobsters in a salon and on a city street. But there's much more sleaze and sex, almost reaching pomo status.

No doubt the hard-up oriental-trash fans will drool (and emit other bodily excretions) over this bizarre, low-budget tale. I've got an "exploitation" streak in me, but my favorite thing about RAPED BY AN ANGEL wasn't the babes & blood, but the disturbing intelligence of the villainous rapist, played by the guy from ESCAPE FROM CORAL COVE (as a zombie) and ABRA-CADABRA (store clerk). The character, though ruthless, deranged & incredibly perverted, comes off as frighteningly intelligent. Simon Yam, playing a happy-go-lucky mad, steals the film though.

The villain is a lawyer who prefers rape over willing sex, even if he has a gorgeous girlfriend; their sex is mock rape, he always handcuffs her and other babes before they do the old turn heat. He videotapes his partners being raped, lets his friends get some snitch, and even provides a cheap thrill for a local retard, of at the

expense of unwilling females. His luck changes when he goes after a couple TV models. One he accidentally kills during a struggle, so he cuts her body up and sticks the pieces in a tub of acid (fairly graphic). However, the surviving model (I think the

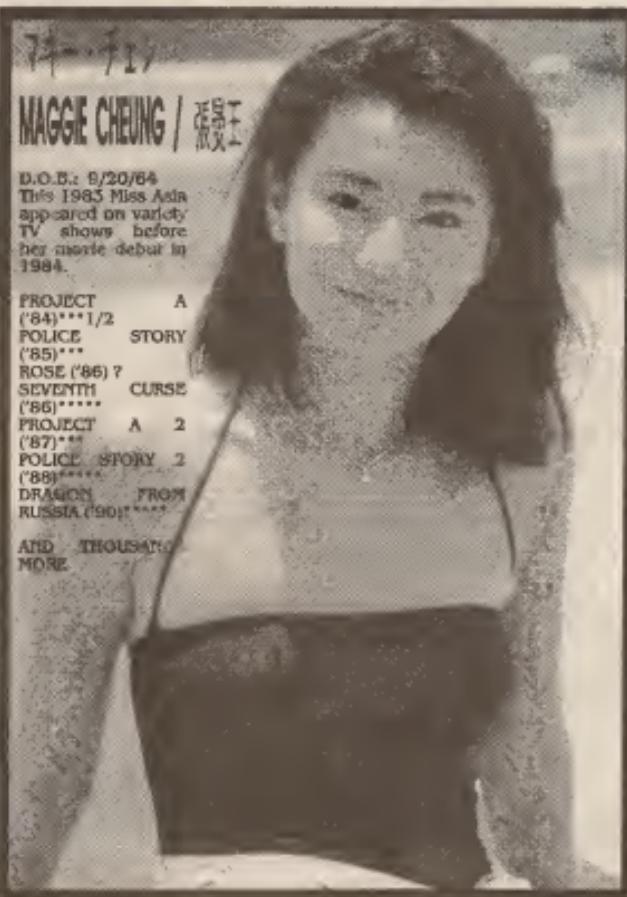
from the police station (the kinky lawyer framed him) and beats the crap out of the villain. The model kicks him in the balls before the police arrive. \*\*\*

## RETURN OF THE CHINESE BOXER

Presented by Cheng Ming Film Co in 1974, Producer Jimmy Wong Yu, Executive Producer Teal Yi Ming, Production Manager: Cheng Sheau Yen, Action Dir: Heih Ngang, Cameraman: Chou Yao Xu, Lighting: Ah Pina, Asst Dir: Chen When Pin, Huang Chong Kuang, Screenplay: Ko Lung, Director: Jimmy Wong Yu, Starring: Jimmy Wong Yu, Lung Fen, Cheung Ying Chen, Chin Kang, Cheng Chih Min

I suppose it's very prejudiced presumptuous of me, but I expected this to be a sequel to Wong Yu's (Jimmy Wong Yu in the credits) earlier ground breaker, THE CHINESE BOXER (see OC#10). What was I thinking? Just because it's called RETURN OF THE CHINESE BOXER, I expected for a sequel? How unresonable of me! This is a period film where men have poniytails, so it's set well before CHINESE BOXER.

RETURN is an unusual adventure, it definitely offers some surprises and unique ideas. The Japanese villains aren't portrayed as evil: no raping, racism or harassment (in fact, it's the Chinese who attack THEM first). There are, however, way too many characters, there are endless challenges and duels between a wide variety of martial artists, kung fu masters, samurais, a judo expert, gunslingers



actress's name might be Cho Su Chien) happens to be dating a mobster-with-a-heart-of-gold, Simon Yam. When the rapist tries to "poker" her at her apartment, he ends up getting a substitute, a girl with AIDS! It was all a trap, the AIDS victim was a friend of the model. By the time, Simon Yam arrives

glores, a female ninja (ninja?), zombies and even a couple Thai Boxers (their attire is Thai, but their technique is too fleshy and acrobatic to be genuine Thai boxing). Regardless, Wang Yu's battle with these two is the highlight of the film. There's plenty of wacky feels and ninja-like gimmicks as the mysterious Sau Pai Lung (Wing Yu) pops in at the nick of time, to rescue Chinese soldiers from assorted villains, Japanese and otherwise. Though dubbed in "but eff!" English, the story's abnormal approach is too herd to follow and not get a headache. Since I value my health more than I value your business, let's just say that there are plenty of interesting confrontations before Sau Pai Lung battles his toughest adversary: a samurai/Hitman who's mastered: karate, swordplay, the kama, chain-whips and guile! So Sau must outsmart this Japanese sharpshooter, and leads him into a building full of mannequins and puppets, all made to look like our hero! The karate gunfiend wastes all his ammunition on these replicas! So Sau jumps him, and after another kung fu fight, picks up what looks like a pitchfork, but is actually a powerful gun, and blasts his rival away! Interesting climax to a kung fu film; that makes it an interesting kung fu film!\*\*\*

#### MR. CANTON & LADY ROSE

*[aka MIRACLE] Presented by Golden Harvest in 1988. Producer: Raymond Chow. Cast: Jackie Chan, Anita Mui, Tung Pui (aka Dung Palo and Bill Tung), Wu Ma, Lo Lieh, Richard Ng, Alan Lo, John Cheung, Jackie*

#### Cheung, Yuen Pak, Amy Yip.

In 1987 or 1988, when Jackie Chan was in San Francisco, he mentioned he was making a remake of an American film he loved as a kid; but wouldn't tell us which one. Of course, my knowledge of American

drama, in order to figure out what the hell MR. CANTON & LADY ROSE is all about it's over two hours long (that's one and a half hours too many), and with subtleties cropped at the ends; it's a very unpleasant experience. The fact that a props technician

died (falling from a huge set) during pre-production makes this disappointing production all the more painful to sit through. Fortunately, there are a few decent, comedic gags (i.e. Jackie running around while stuck in a basket), and its fights and stunts are great. However, this romp marked a transition for Jackie, no longer will we see the action extravaganzas like those which preceded it (DRAGONS FOREVER and POLICE STORY 2 were his last thrilling classics); this movie represents his aging, his softening process. Its fights concentrate less on kung fu stunts, and more on acrobatics, and creative use of objects at hand. My god! The ideas he comes up with! Some of these stunts are not only brilliant, but dangerous. These scenes alone plus a five-second cameo by Amy Yip in top form (x), make an otherwise disappointing movie worth checking out. But

as I wrote this, I

films rivals my knowledge of Lithuanian folk music, so I didn't rack my brain for an answer. Well, it turned out to be some old gangster film directed by Frank Capra, whoever THAT is (maybe they mean Frank Zappa?), called POCKET FULL OF MIRACLES. Ma he'll have to see this American

watched my 'condensed' version of the movie, which lacks much of the drama, possibly a whole hour removed. I think it's better this way. Had I viewed the long, uncut print I saw in the theater a few years back, this would have been a hateful, scathing

## サリー・イップ SALLY YEH / 葉倩文

### (aka SALLY YIP)

D.O.B. Sept. 30, 1961.  
Raised partially in Canada,  
she returned to HK in the  
early 1980s, making her  
movie debut in 1982.

MR. BOO! ('82)  
THE OCCUPANT ('84)\*  
WELCOME ('85)  
ACES GO PLACES 4  
('86)\*\*\*\*  
PEKING OPERA BLUES  
('86)  
ROBOT FORCE/I LOVE  
MARIA ('88)\*  
THE KILLER ('89)\*\*\*\*



Set in 1930s HK, Kuo Cheng Wah (Jackie Chan), an out-of-work laborer purchases a series of 'lucky flowers' from some old lady. His luck changes, and he unwittingly becomes involved with some mobsters. Treated well and quickly promoted, he develops a rivalry with a jealous mobster, Lo Lieh (oldtimer from **FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH**, which you already knew). In a subplot, Anita Mui and her golden voice sing about roses in a nightclub called the Ritz.

What else happens? Uh, oh yeah, the flower peddler is poor and lower class, so Jackie feels bad about it. Then that jealous Lo Lieh frames Jackie, passing off rival mobster Tiger, who's had his eye on the Ritz. Something else probably happens, and then there's a fight in a warehouse full of ropes, huge spools, ladders and pulleys! Great climax! One of! Nope, this film is like that Energizer rabbit: it just keeps going and going, and going. The short remainder of the film isn't a fight, but some warmhearted tear jerker, as the gangsters all forgive each other. One more thing, they all live happily ever after \*\*\*1/2

**LUNG WEI VILLAGE**

Executive Producer: YC Tan. Producer: Ho Iker Teng. Cameraman: Shu Te Li. Starring: Polly Shan Kuan, Yao Hua, Lo Lieh.

**Bazza!** This is the strongest chopsocky farce I've ever seen! It's all very Chinese, so it comes off as awkward when dubbed into English. Things really get confusing and offbeat, something was definitely

lost in the translation. I guess this movie is an overdone spoof of Chinese culture and tradition, so all the dialogue is overly lyrical, traditional post-Peking opera stuff, so in English, it sounds corny and stupid.

Speaking of stupid, that sums up this

safe to assume nobody should drive, operate hazardous machinery or engage in conversation while on the stuff. It's got an interesting cast: Yush Hua, Shengkuan Lin-fang, and even Lo Lieh playing a hero! Yush Hua, spelled Yao Hua, was a hero in 1960s

period time like **THE MONKEY AND COME DRINK WITH ME**. He managed to survive in the 1970s too, in kung fu movies like this one. **7 BLOWS OF THE DRAGON, MONKEY KUNG FU**, and 1972's **PAYMENT IN BLOOD**, an urban modern crime drama I'm dying to see. He finally fizzled out to 'has been status' in the 1980s, he was only in one film I know of, **IN THE LINE OF DUTY 3**. Regardless, he's had an interesting career. Anybody have any info on the guy?

Shengkuan Lin-fang, also called something else in this movie, is also a product of period fantasies. This gorgeous actress is an excellent martial artist, but that's all I know about her. Again, any info would be appreciated.

Now's the painful part of this review, I'm dreading the! Men, this script is weaker than a William S. Burroughs novel. Lo Lieh, Yush Hua and Shengkuan Lin-fang are after a

Ching (ravished and murderer called Chu Er Ming). Shengkuan supposedly dresses as a man throughout this film. This overdone Chinese tradition is ridiculous, a mere hat doesn't make her look remotely masculine, especially when she cakes on a ton of makeup which

(continued on page 26)

## 7-9-41 ANITA MUI / 麥豎豎 (aka Anita Mei)

She's been involved in showbiz her whole life, even as a child she appeared in movies and classical Chinese operas. Her musical career really took off in 1982. Her first real claim to fame as an actress happened two years later. She made headlines a while back when she, like so many other HK superstars, was hassled by triads. To date, she's been in numerous movies, including:

**ROUGE ('88)**  
**A BETTER TOMORROW PT 3 ('89)**  
**MR. CANTON & LADY ROSE ('88)\*\*\***



whole stupid movie. It's silly, corny, far-fetched as hell, and ridiculous. However, it's entertaining, so that makes its moronity forgivable. There are plenty of fights, and done very well! It's a funny tale too, the antics are somewhat amusing. Whatever narcoleptic the director and writer were on, it's

and murderer called Chu Er Ming. Shengkuan supposedly dresses as a man throughout this film. This overdone Chinese tradition is ridiculous, a mere hat doesn't make her look remotely masculine, especially when she cakes on a ton of makeup which



Because space is more scarce than a snail in a salt factory, this column combines two previous columns, TERROR YAKI and KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE. In this column, JAPANTASY, I'll try to include as many Japanese monsters, heroes and cartoons as I have time for. This column is experimental, it may not return next issue. Before we get into our reviews, here are a couple updates:

ULTRAMAN news: Ultracom, the U.S. branch of the Tsuburaya Company, is releasing ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO. Filmed in LA, it's the first Ultra series produced in the U.S. and promises to be better than Australia's ULTRAMAN: TOWARDS THE FUTURE. But then, crab face is more fun than ULTRAMAN: TOWARDS THE FUTURE. However, I still tend to prefer the older Ultra programs, this column's obligatory Ultra review is 1973's ULTRAMAN TARO, a blast from the past!

GOZILLA news: Okay, I know! Enough already! Shut your fucking mouth! Every newly informed geek seems to want to tell me all about the upcoming American Godzilla flick from TriStar Pictures. Some say Tim Burton will direct, others say it's Terry Gilliam. I really couldn't care less. If that's not annoying enough, some people are finally talking about 1999's GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE, because it eventually got dubbed into English. Look, you moron! It's old news! Open your eyes, there's more to life than what Blockbuster Video has to offer (BIOLLANTE has been available from Japanese stores and classy bootleggers for years). In other Godzilla-hype, remember a couple years back when 1991's GODZILLA VS. GHIDORAH made U.S. headlines because of its supposed 'anti-American' commentary? Well, here more recent remakes, like GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA (Toho; 1992) and GODZILLA VS. MECHA-

GODZILLA (Toho; 1993) gotten the same publicity? Nope, both are virtually unknown in U.S. news. To maintain fame, I suggest that Toho make a movie called GODZILLA VS. THOSE BLOODY THIRSTY, BIG-NOSED YANKEE BARBARIAN ASSHOLES. But enough on current topics, since for this issue, we'll go back to 1972, to get a load of an older classic, GODZILLA VS. GIGAN.

TOEI SUPERHERO news: As I write this in August 1992, the current live action superheroes airing on Tokyo's TV Asahi are JAN PERSON (another ROBOCOP wannabe, but more on that next issue) and DAI RANGER. DAI RANGER is the latest Sento (superhero team), not unlike the previous season's JYU RANGER (see OC#14), which has degenerated into America's own MIGHTY MORPHING POWER RANGERS (reviewed in this issue). DAI RANGER, JYU RANGER, and the slightly older TURBO RANGER are all basically the same series under different titles.

### ウルトラマンタロウ

#### ULTRAMAN TARO

Produced by Tsuburaya Productions in 1973, Broadcast on the Tokyo Broadcasting Service (TBS) from 4/6/73 to 4/5/74, consisting of 53 episodes. Main Writer: Shigemitsu Taguchi. Directed by Eizo Yamagishi. Music: Masanobu Higuri. Starring Saburo Shono

ULTRAMAN TARO, the 5th ULTRAMAN sequel, turned out not to be quite as inferior as I said it was in OC#9, a few years ago. I was somehow of the impression that



Ultraman Taro (third from the right) and the other Ultra Brothers mourn their father's death.



*Ultraman Taro and Ultra Mother care for an injured Zoly.*

This was an incredibly childish program, but it seems I've been jaded. I expected something incredibly infantile when I recently watched the pilot episode for the first time. What I found was an entertaining 30 minutes, the fact that it was all in Japanese didn't make it boring, because it's fast paced with plenty of action. So I'll review this sci-fi series once more, now that I'm a little more familiar with it. For once, when reviewing this series, I know what the hell I'm talking about. Perhaps it was later in the show that the real newness set in since I have no complaints for this one. What follows is my review of the first episode in future issues. I may critique other episodes of *ULTRAMAN TARO*, or maybe other Ultra programs.

Episode #1 Our heroic Kotaro (Saburo Shimoji) didn't quite get along with the Z.A.T., the program's Science Patrol clones. Spunky Kotaro had just gotten out of the mannes when tragedy struck: Two humongous monsters, Oil Drinker and Astromonus appeared! Not only did they battle each other, but destroyed a whole city as well. Kotaro's bravery in pursuing the monster



nearly got him killed, but it gained the respect of them futuristic soldiers, Z.A.T., who he'd previously browbeaten with. By the time one monster (a mutated dinosaur with a hungry flower on its stomach) ate the other, it's been revealed that Kotaro is actually descended from them metallic giants from outer space, the Ultra Brothers! So not only has he joined Z.A.T., but his secret identity as Ultraman Taro makes him all the more important. It ends after Taro kills Astromonus. The climax though repeated many



times before and since, is the usual Ultra excellence as Ultraman Taro battles the destructive monster, using the usual lasers, explosions and martial arts/wrestling tactics.

The FX, like miniatures and superimpositions are outstanding: the only laughable things being the monsters. However, this is forgivable. Them Tabureyn dudes are to be commended for at least being able to create these outrageous costumes on a weekly basis (sometimes two monsters a week!). These suits may not be realistic, but there's no such thing as a realistic monster, they're denizens of fantasy, not reality. There's no point whining about a cheap-looking Ultra monster, not so long as the monsters of *DR WHO* exist.

But my only gripe against the first episode of *ULTRAMAN TARO* is we see very little of the other Ultra Brothers: only brief glimpses of Zoly, Ultraseven, Ultraman Jack, Ultraman Ace, and of course, Ultraman himself. Ultra Mother appears too, as out-of-proportion as always. Who's in that costume? Kitteh Natividad, maybe? One last thing: I believe Z.A.T. stands for "Zerbas of All Territory", and I sure as hell don't know what a "Zerbas" is!!!

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宇宙からのメッセージ

#### MESSAGE FROM SPACE

1978, a joint production of Toei Company, Ltd. & Tohoku Shinsha Film Co., Ltd. Dr. King Fukasaku, Producers: Bergero Uemura, Yoshimori Watanabe, Tan Takawa, Created by Shōtarō Ishimori, Misashiro Noda, Kenji Fukasaku, Screenplay: Hiro

Matsuda, Dir. of Photography: Toru Rekijima, Music Composed by Ken-ichi Matsuka, Music Performed by Columbia's Symphony Orchestra (Japan), Science Fiction Supervisor: Misashiro Noda, Space Flying objects designed by Shōtarō Ishimori, Special photographic effects: Minoru Nakano, Art Director: Tetsuro Oiwa, CAST: Vic Morrow, Sonny Chiba, Philip Casnoff, Peggy Lee Brennen, Etsuko Shomi, Tetsuro Tanba, Miko Nentu, Makoto Sato, Hiroyuki Sanada, Isamu Shimizu, Masatoshi Okabe, Noboru

Matsuji, Hibyo Amamori, running time: 105 minutes.

Yep, it's got its moments of silliness and stupidity, but looking back on it, it's enjoyable. Like other space fantasies of the 1970s, it owes plenty to *STAR WARS*. I do, however, dispute the criticisms of critics, it's not a complete ripoff. *MESSAGE* is based on the old story *SATOMI HAKENDEN* (known in America as *LEGEND OF THE EIGHT SAMURAI*, with many of the same cast members), an influential novel which inspired the basic concept used in *SEVEN SAMURAI*, *STAR WARS*, and, of course, *MESSAGE*. George Lucas got plenty of ideas from Japanese films and TV, so both *STAR WARS* and *MESSAGE* have the same ancient Japanese roots. As far as similarities to *STAR WARS*, *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA*, etc., my only gripe is its symphonic score. Over used, and trying too hard to sound like the *STAR WARS* theme. I actually prefer *MESSAGE* over *STAR WARS* (no big surprise, coming from me); because it's more colorful, the sets and costumes are more imaginative. But ignoring its similarities to *STAR WARS* and the whole outer space genre of the 1970s, I think on its own, it's a fun combination of fantasy, camp and action, and yet I dare say portions are intelligently written.

Beyond a doubt, the best production values are its special effects, no complaints about its miniatures, pyros or superimpositions. Contrary to complaints by anti-Japanese movie critics, this film sure as hell is NOT cheap! They put a lot of work into these sets and FX! of course, this is from Toei, the world's superhero perfectionists,

who used the technology they'd later apply to their TV shows. In fact this movie spawned a sequel, the exciting *MESSAGE FROM SPACE* TV show (edited together to form a movie for English release, as either *SWORDS OF THE SPACE ARK* or *SPACE NINJAS*; unfortunately, I've never seen them). The series features the return of



Kumai, she's an evil Gavana warrior



Godzilla and Gigan battle it out.

Hiroyuki Sanada, also in this original movie

Hiroyuki Sanada ('Duke Sanada' or 'Henry Sanada' to dumb folks who know little about Japanese films) isn't the only J.A.C. member in this film, there's Etsuko Shiomi, and JAC founder-himself, Sonny Chiba! By now, I assume you all know what JAC is, it's not like I've never written about them before. If you STILL don't know about JAC, read *OC#14* again, stupid! Unfortunately, these three JAC superstars do none of the karete they're known for.

Other Japanese co-stars include Makoto Sato and Tetsuro Tamba. But Toei wanted international sales, so they hired some guy called Philip Casnoff, Peggy Lee Brennan (from an episode of *MASH*) and Vic Morrow, a few years before he had that fatal meeting with a helicopter blade. Morrow's performance is serious and logical, while the other two yankee's play happy-go-lucky party animals, always saying 'yay & 'humay,' and jumping up and down hugging each other. Through no fault of their own, they both make asses of themselves. Speaking of which, does Peggy Lee Brennan have a decent bod? Under that space outfit? In the scene where she danced, it made me wish her costume was tighter. Her dingy character is annoying, but she's much worse in the Japanese version. I cringed every time she spoke dubbed in an awful Japanese voice, sounding like a 10 year old.

Storywise, there are those metallic Vikings out in space who've destroyed the planet Jelica. Two survivors, played by Makoto Sato and Etsuko Shiomi, go into space in search of avenging heroes. They're guided by magical 'love' seeds! They're fucking walnuts! What idiotic FX writer made this decision? With all these epic production values, couldn't they afford to design some-

thing more original? The only real nut is the director.

Regardless, these Little Walnuts fly around in search of various different heroes played by Philip Casnoff, Vic Morrow, Peggy Lee Brennan, Sonny Chiba, and Hiroyuki Sanada. So our various heroes, from different walks of life are off to battle the Gavana empire, who are now eying the Earth as their next conquest. With the help of the nuts, it's the nuts of the Gavanas which get kicked.

The climactic battle is, of course, very *STAR WARS*-ish. The scene of the space ships going through tunnels to blast the main generator is a quick shot. But amid the explosions, space battles and ray guns, Sonny Chiba's sword play stands out. He single handedly defeats a group of Gavanas, before his duel to the death with the Gavana leader, who (of course) killed his parents. It ends happily ever after, until the TV show took over, showing the battles of the Next Generation \*\*\*

## ゴジラ対ガイガン

*GODZILLA VS. GIGAN*

Produced by Toho Movie Co. in 1972, released to America by New World Pictures in 1978 as *GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND*, released on video by New World Video in 1988. Executive Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Screenplay: Shirochi Sakizawa, Dir. of Photography: Kyoshi Hasegawa, Music: Akira Sakube, Dr. Jun Fukuda, Dir. of Special Effects: Teruyoshi Nakano. Starring: Hiroshi Ishikawa, Minoru Takashima, Kuniyo Mural, Tomoko Umeda.

"They want peace," "we want peace"



say the film's characters. I must say, the only peace I wanted was a piece of the lead heroine's ass! The character was also supposedly a black belt in karate. Of course, the Tokyo films of 1972 and before weren't known for their martial arts (the only movie makers who knew anything about martial arts in 1972 were the Chinese), so the two 'karate' fights are little more than clumsy chops reminiscent of Don Knott's work in *THE GHOST & MR. CHICKEN*. Of course, *GODZILLA VS. GIGAN* is not a karate film, but its other human characters are pretty stupid too. Attempts at comedy which fall flat on their faces. But still, the story is somewhat interesting, and it's nice to finally hear the lead character say "You're a hard bitch!" This was censored from the version I saw as a kid in the 1970s, at some matinees. The English dubbing isn't great, like when they refer to a place called 'Yamanshi', I don't think there's such a place. It's actually a district called Yamano-cho, so the dubbing is a translation error (it is pronounced 'shi' by them Japanese). But if you can find it, get the English tape, released by New World Video. It's uncut, unlike the cut version, *GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND* (an early re-titling). New World Video's only real flaw is putting two priestesses on the box cover! They're actually the same girl, Bar-

bara Lynn, in two different kimonos, as she appears in 74's *GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA*, not *GIGAN*! Yet my minor gripes and petty complaints die like nicotine addicts when the stunning image of Godzilla appears on the screen. Sure, some serious geeks complained that Godzilla's 1970s adventures are kiddie films, and yet many of these same dorky hypocrites enjoy Disney's cartoon 'classics' and *THE SIMPSONS*. To me, *GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND* is not a kiddie film, but an average science fiction thriller. This 1972 Godzilla and sidekick Angiles have more heart and personality than the creatures in more recent, stale, generic, bastardized Godzilla movies (anything after *TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA*). It's the film's human characters who seem stupid, while Godzilla and Angiles know what they're doing, stealing the film. Godzilla and Angiles are well matched, more so than Godzilla's team up with Jet Jaguar and King Seeser. It's rather odd to see our two reptilian heroes speak English though (in the Japanese version, their conversation is translated by word bubbles, like in comic books). The main problem is Ghidorah, he moves too slow, and his minature (flying mode) is completely still. Then when it cuts to stock footage of him in 1965's *GHIDRAH THE 3-HEADED MONSTER* (aka *GODZILLA VS. GHIDRAH*), he's suddenly moving quickly. The stock footage gets pretty annoying, scenes from *GHIDRAH*, *GODZILLA VS. SMOG MONSTER*; *WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS* and *DESTROY ALL MONSTERS* are easily recognizable.

The story swipes too much from *DESTROY ALL MONSTERS*; again, alien invaders control giant monsters so as to conquer the world. Only this time, they're mutant cockroaches from outer space, Nabule M Spacehunter. Anyone who saw *THE DAY AFTER* knows only cockroaches can live through pollution and nuclear attack. So these super smart roaches, whose planet was destroyed by humanoid

oppressors, are taking it out on us Earthlings. Disguised as Japanese people, they're on Earth, creating a high-tech army base disguised as an amusement park. Among other futuristic structures, there's a central headquarters called the 'Godzilla Tower,' which resembles Mettels Godzilla Shogun Warrior from the 1970s. Their faction signal tapes, containing a type of sonar, summons destructive monsters who'll do their dirty work. But these two humongous aliens, Ghidorah and Gigan (his debut) are confronted by reptilian Earthlings Godzilla & Angiles! They swim from Monster Island and to Japan could have been better if Toho's only waterproof Godzilla suit hadn't looked so much different than the one used in the rest of the film. After more mumbo jumbo, like comic artist Geingo investigating the disguised cockroaches, all four monsters eventually clash. This is normally the high point of a Godzilla movie, but in this case, the monster battles are dull. The whole thing is slow-paced, a little too dark, and it drags. Regardless, there are a couple scenes of squinting blood (again out from the G Rated print I saw as a twerp), and the efforts of Godzilla and Angiles are touching. All the FX, be it explosive pyro or superimposed lasers are impressive. The aliens die in a fiery explosion devised by the human heroes, and then Godzilla & Angiles drive Ghidorah and Gigan back into space. The fights aren't great, but I can see why the 1970s Godzilla was considered a superhero. I don't mean that in a negative way, he's a hero and a damn good one. Even now, I get all teary-eyed (tears of joy) at Godzilla and Angiles swim off into the sunset, accompanied by a charismatic balled *GODZILLA VS. GIGAN* is the Godzilla equivalent of spaghetti western.\*\*\*

仮面ライダーV3  
カーデストロン怪人

閃電騎士V3

FRANKENSTEIN'S KUNG FU MONSTER

Ein Film Der Atlas Film und TV Produktion, und Assocationenki Venereth Ton Hong Film, Kommandi. German version taken from China's *SUPER RIDER V3 WITH THE DEVIL*, which in turn is actually a re-edited from Japan's *KAMEN RIDER V3*. Presented in China by Tong Heng Film Co., Presented in Japan by Toei Co. and TV Asahi. Directed by Chong Guan Lin. Starring Tong Hei Wong and Chen Chen Wong.

*KAMEN RIDER V3* (Toei, 1973) was one of the most popular Japanese superhero TV shows since *ULTRAMAN*, so it



Above: Kamen Rider V3 on his motorcycle, Hurricane.

Below: L to R, Kamen Rider 1, Kamen Rider V3 and Kamen Rider 2.



came as no surprise when the likes of KAMEN RIDER V3 and the original KAMEN RIDER were bought for Chinese audiences by Tong Hsing Film Co. for release in HK and Taiwan. These TV shows were edited into movies like SUPER RIDERS WITH THE DEVIL (see OCs #9 & #14). Its sequel, SUPER RIDER V3 WITH THE DEVIL, later reached a third nationality. German! Das is vunderbar, no? The title in Germany, FRANKENSTEINS KUNG FU MONSTER is another example of kraut ineptitude. They call YONGARY (a Korean film) GODZILLA'S TODESPRANKE, and their title for GODZILLA VS. GIGAN is FRANKENSTEINS HOLLOWENBRUT. Those Germans never could get their names or titles right! Jys, das is very stupidahly, komaddi! Bott you will enjoy dees movie, kossack!

To American fans, the first sign of the film came in April, 1977, when FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND #133 had a few photos from it, but no real information. It took the VHS revolution of the 1980s to finally familiarize us with this Japanese/Chinese/German film. I've been a Kamen Rider fan most of my life. KAMEN RIDER, KAMEN RIDER V3, KAMEN RIDER X and the others are all influential, great programs. So naturally, I was happier than a dike at a slumber party when I finally got my greedy paws on this illusive film! Most of its fights are from the Japanese theatrical features, KAMEN RIDER V3 VS. DESTRON (see OC#9) but the footage of Japanese actors was cut out, no more Hiroshi Myauchi. In his place is some Chinese guy, playing the newly named "Super Rider V3". Regardless of whether the characters are Japanese or Chinese, it's all dubbed in German. There are also some fights performed by a Chinese stunt crew. They're using the same costumes as the Japanese but the Chinese have their own additional characters. One is the same sphinx lady from the previous movie, and the other is a warlor, a cross between a Viking, samurai, demon and cyborg. The difference in Japanese karate choreography and Chinese kung fu

choreography becomes evident, as it did in the first film. One strange thing is that the Japanese superhero Riderman is a female in this Chinese adaptation! It's still the late Akira Yemaguchi under the Riderman costume, despite the female voice. Speaking of voices, I'm still not used to hearing the Kamen Riders speak German! It was hard enough hearing them speak Chinese for the first time. I'll stick to "Henshin", rather than "Achtung!"

There's a strange theme song not present in any original Japanese Kamen Rider series or movie. It's mostly whistling, and probably added by the Chinese. However, it does remind me of German beer drinking music, so who knows where it came from? Otherwise, most of the music is from Toei's original episodes.

As for the story, I don't speak German. I'm far more familiar with Japanese and Chinese. So I can't follow the story too well. Fortunately, the story is the same as that for KAMEN RIDER VS. DESTRON, including our hero's attack on the island base. The only real difference are the names of the villains: ... , Japan, Destron, China, Devil-Germany, Frankenstein. So forget the story: all you need to know is who's good, who's bad, and that the four Kamen Riders (1, 2, V3, and Ridewoman) can jump, flip, ride motorcycles and defeat dozens of monsters and henchmen\*\*\*\*

#### 恐怖戰隊ジュウレンジャー

#### MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS

Co-Producer: Ellen Levy Samoil, Supervising Producers: Winston Richard, Tony Oliver, Producers: Ronnie Hester, Jonathan Taylor, Casting: Katy Wallin, Production Designer: Yude Aka. Released by Renaissance Atlantic Entertainment, in Association with MMPI Productions Inc., and Seinen Entertainment, produced in Japan by Toei Ltd., CAST: Austin St. John as Jason, Thuy Trang as Trini, Walter Jones as Zack, Amy

The heroic  
POWER  
RANGERS,  
L to R:  
Trini  
Ranger,  
Ptera  
Ranger,  
Dragon  
Ranger (a  
temporary  
character),  
Tiger Ranger  
and  
Mammoth  
Ranger



## キック

Jo Johnson as Kimberly, David Yost as Billy; also featuring Paul Scher, Jason Narvy, David Fielding, Machiko Soba.

First of all, the original ZYU RANGERS (pronounced "Jew Rangers") aired in Japan in 1982, as reported in OC#14. I assume "Zyu" is their interpretation of "Zoo", as in Zoology (hence the dinosaurs). So a year later, that over rated, ultra-typical bunch of crap JURASSIC PARK generates 'dino mania' in America, so, for the first time since the 1987 bastardization of DYNAMAN (Toei; 1983) on NIGHTFLIGHT, a Toei Sentai comes to America. ZYU RANGERS became America's POWER RANGERS at an ironic time when protests against violence on kiddie TV were widespread in the news. It still surprises me to see live action martial arts on children's TV. No doubt the PTL and FCC will moan, groan, whine and complain about this. So I say, "suck it, if you don't like it, don't watch it." POWER RANGERS is the best thing on American TV since the old days of ULTRAMAN or SPECTREMAN!

But don't get me wrong, I'm not happy to see it. I do like it on American TV. The never-ending Sentai genre has always had a chic, cult following in the U.S., because it was so unique, and obscure. It's sudden national exposure on the Fox Network may over expose it and pave the way for more runnings of Japanese TV. I hope POWER RANGERS bombs and fails in the U.S., much like DYNAMAN did about two years before.

Whereas *ultraman* and *JOHNNY SOKKO* came to the U.S. in pure form (most footage intact), POWER RANGERS proves the American public has become incredibly racist. Virtually all the original film of Japanese actors has been spiced out, only the special effects remain! The new cast members are Americans, all looking like rejects from *SAVED BY THE BELL*. In fact, the majority of each episode of POWER RANGERS is new American footage. It's a wonder they didn't just make their own series out of scratch. On average, there's only about ten minutes of original ZYU RANGER scenes per episode, the

remainder is of American suburban collage age yuppies, pretending to play high school students (nearly the whole show takes place at some high school campus or youth center). However, the villains are indeed from the original Japanese episodes of ZYU RANGER, and as such, their costumes are outlandish and spectacular! These monsters are lead by Bandora (Rita in the English version), played by the queen of Japanese superhero villainy Machiko Soba. It's amazing, after years of playing evil witches, amazons and invaders, she's finally being dubbed in English and seen on American TV. However, the crime of all crimes is she's given no credit, nor are any other creators from Japan (though Toei is quickly mentioned as the end credits roll very fast). This is unforgivable, and really, nasty of Seban Entertainment. Again, I wish POWER RANGERS would fail miserably, but I fear it'll be a whopping success. After all, what's to compare it with an American children's TV? BARNEY? Everything else out here is a fucking cartoon. So here comes this live action series full of the best, most colorful and plentiful FX we've seen on American kiddie TV! After endless cartoons and predictable crap, comes this series of all minute blockbusters full of minibots, robots, stunts, monsters, laser beams, kick costumes, and explosions. Compared to BAT-MAN and X-MEN cartoons, POWER RANGERS is quite refreshing; some quality superheroes for once. Yet I can't help but despise POWER RANGERS because of the horrible way the Americans butchered it to pieces, removing any hint of Japanese origin. Needless to say, the original Japanese version is infinitely superior, even if the Japanese actresses look a bodd like that of Amy Jo Johnson's! For more on the Japanese version, see OC#14, page 47.

To be fair, the the young adults chosen to replace the Japanese actors play their parts well. Queenly's stupid characters, but that's the fault of the writers, and besides, in kiddie shows, even the original Japanese casts have to always ham it up in the most childish ways imaginable. What surprises me is that TV GLIDE subtitled this show POWER RANGERS-Teenager! It's far too infantile for that age group! Our five American actors consist of a token black, token geek, an oriental girl, and an actor called Austin St. John. Despite the acting ability of public here, he's got some serious martial arts skills. If only American censorship weren't so rampant, he could really kick ass and add to the series and not detract from it. Another likeable character, especially to heterosexual males, is a gymnast played by Amy Jo Johnson. Attractive is putting it mildly, especially since her wardrobe consists largely of form-fitting garments which emphasize the bust. I never knew seventeen

year old boys masturbating. Another good thing about POWER RANGERS is the clean editing, it really looks like Amy Jo Johnson, Austin St. John and the others are in the same place as the villains. Of course, Seban Entertainment was smart enough to buy many of the original costumes from Toei, to give the illusion that when a monster is rampaging Tokyo, he's actually in LA! There are occasional editing flaws though, like an early one where a pig monster visits what's obviously Tokyo Tower!

The story takes place at an American high school, and the only one in the nation where even the tough kids don't bring guns to class. In order to battle the smaller monsters, demons, cyborgs and maggots of the ancient empire of Bandora, a super computer called Zordan changes 5 students into the Zyu Rangers (Power Rangers) in English, a high-tech team of superheroes, don't need the English names of these heroes, but their Japanese names are: Tyrion Ranger (Rita), Austin St. John, Tiger Ranger (Goku), Thuy Trang, Mammoth Ranger (Goku), Walter Jones, and Pean Ranger (Amy Jo Johnson). Using their ray guns, swords, mechanical choppers, metal arms, giant robots and other weapons, they're banishing Bandora's evil queen, Rita (Machiko Soba). Whether you know her as Bandora or Rita, it's actress Machiko Soba, no stranger to Japanese sci-fi. There are additional characters, like a couple enjoying students meant to be bullies, whose poor attempts at humor nearly ruin an already ruined series. 1/2



The original Japanese cast battles bandora! These scenes were cut from the English release.



# FILIPINO FILMS

This continuing column, FILIPINO FILMS first started as a joke in 1990, when OC#10 added FILIPINO CORNER to its lineup of Asian film coverage. In time, it grew like a tick in a strip joint, to the average-size column it is today. Reviewing movies from the Philippines has proved to be a major test of my love of Far Eastern flicks! But if nothing else, it has redefined what a true 'movie fan' is. Some suburban geek who only rents American films may consider himself a movie fan, but he's actually just an 'American movie fan.' It takes time, devotion, and patience to seek out obscure movies from far away lands, and although many new discoveries suck like a black hole, it's always an eye-opening experience, making outer regions that much less mysterious.

In future OCs, as it continues to evolve, I hope to include rare stuff from Vietnam and India. Any voluntary, masochistic writers? After all, with me exposing the productions of Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan and now even the Philippines, I lack the time to discover new countries. If ever you choose to view a Filipino movie, be forewarned: Most are pathetically cheap, and heavy on the dialogue. No English subtitles are ever

added, as that would cost more than the full production itself. But on very rare occasions, some, like *KILLING OF SATAN* and *BICKIDS* have been dubbed. With horrendous production values and tons of talking in Tagalog, many are virtually unwatchable. In all honesty, were it not for OC, I would not waste my money on Filipino movies. But I've never regretted watching these unique films once I made the initial effort, and it always proves enlightening or educational.

The world of Filipino films will always remain obscure. I can't see this genre getting wide exposure outside the Philippines. But who knows? One day, will American con-geeks be tossing aside their John Woo & Tsui Hark films in favor of the latest epic by Raymond Bang Revilla, Joey De Leon, Rene Requiestas, Edu Manzano, Kempee De Leon, or Robin Padilla? Will shrimps and overweight couch potatoes begin jerking off to pictures of Filipino starlets like Anjanette Abeyar,

*Left: Anjanette Abeyar*

*Right: Sheryl Cruz*





*Lili Medina!*

Vina Morelos, Sheryl Cruz, Nanette Medved or Lili Medina? THAT'S already begun.

For this edition, I've chosen to spotlight the two Revillas, father and son. The older, Ramon Revilla, seems to have been typecast as a ghostrubber in films like *ELIAS PANIKI* and *KILLING OF SATAN*. He later would become a senator. He still makes an occasional movie appearance, but is now more into politics than film. His son, a heartthrob in the Philippines, is called Raymond 'Bong' Revilla Jr., sometimes just Bong Revilla, sometimes just Raymond Revilla Jr. He's an action star, and was in *ISANG BALA IBANG BUHAY* (OC/10), and this issue's *DUGU NG PANDAY*. But, of course, no fil-col column would be complete without some more moronic silliness from Joey De Leon and Tony Reyes.

#### THE KILLING OF SATAN

Released by Paragon Video Productions, Produced by Cineplex Films Inc., Starring Ramon Revilla and Elizabeth Oropesa.

Ramon Revilla, who played a Filipino vampire-buster in *ELIAS PANIKI* (OC/13), plays a similar role in this similar movie. The only reason I checked out *KILLING OF SATAN* was because it popped up in English, though hidden at a local suburban video store much like Blockbuster English dubbings of fil-flicks are a scarce as MTV-viewers with active brain cells, so I decided to check out *KILLING OF SATAN*. The dubbing consists of unfamiliar voices (no "but stills"), and a few characters still have Filipino accents, so maybe it's they who dubbed it. The story is talky and slow paced, so I'd have hated it in Tagalog. Being a fil-film, everything is very cheap, after all, the only nich Filipinos back then were them Marcos sleepwalks. However, there are a couple of nice little FX which popped up here and there, surprising me! Other scenes

are battles where wizards shoot beams and fire off their hands, though not super imposed as well as those in Chinese movies. Yet for these scattered FX, I recommend you fantasy/horror fans see it if it's easily obtainable. It was for me, but if it had been two full inches out of my reach, I would not have made the effort to step closer and grab it.

Ramon Revilla Sr. plays Landu, a heroic do-gooder. One minute, he's in a shootout with vengeful bandits, and the next, he's off to some remote island to rescue his daughter from Satan, who wants to marry her. I must say, I sympathize with Satan. What few of my readers actually get laid can relate to, to when you're dating a girl who's parents dislike you. Once my date's father told me, "Have her home by midnight, or it's your ass!" To which I replied, "My, aren't you a kinky fellow! You bet I'll be back by midnight! How do we get rid of your daughter for the night?"

But more importantly, Landu inherited magical powers from the deceased (now an aquatic zombie) Uncle Miguel and some old wizard in a cave. Satan is assisted by his own cult of evil magicians, whom Landu fights in a cave. He also encounters a weird goblin, and sexy, seductive witches who change into cats, dogs & snakes. Speaking of snakes, I'm appalled at the way these beautiful creatures are treated as mere props by these foxy Filipino bastards. I'd hate to think how many involuntary 'stunt snakes' were killed or hurt during the many cave battles. But eventually, Landu rescues a group of naked women, and his clothed daughter, from the magical Satanales. His magic kills Satan, who appears to be some guy in a Halloween costume. \* 1/2

#### DUGU NG PANDAY

Presented by Regal Films, Assoc. Prod. Kenneth Paul De Leon, Story: Euse Gallaca, Lora Reyes, Don Escudero, Jerry Lopez Siminang. Screenplay: Jerry Lopez Siminang. Based on the "Panday" series created by Carlos J. Caparas, Editors: Denny Gloria, Costume Design: Mike Guillen. CAST: Ramon 'Bong' Revilla Jr. as Hevio Panday, Edu Manzano as Conde, and featuring: Lao Martinez, Max Alvarado, Ic Mendoza, Alito Melendez.

Until I saw this enchanting fantasy, I never thought I'd actually enjoy a Filipino movie for what it was, as it was meant to be enjoyed. That seemed as likely as finding an intellectual watching *BARNIEY*. But this *DUGU NG PANDAY* is no unintentional comedy. Its superb production values elevate it far above the dreck I've come to expect from the Philippines. By their standards, this virtually flawless epic must be an incredible masterpiece. This entertaining drama/adventure proves that Filipino movie



*Above: Edu Manzano*

*Below: Alito Melendez*



makers can give Hong Kong and Japan a run for their money! If more major movies like this appear, Filipino movies will finally earn a spot on the map of movie making! Were it translated in English, it would have serious potential for Cannes or any other international film festival. If you only watch one Fil-Film in your life, make it the one I'm NOT saying it's wild fun, immensely entertaining or action packed, but definitely my favorite Fil-film to date (though the competition is bleak at best).

My understanding of Tagalog made my understanding of a dog who always sticks his head out a speeding car's window, and yet he never bit my nose off when I blew in his face. Yet lack of translation didn't make me press the 'Scan' button more than twice. Sure, there's too much dialogue, yet I still got the basic of this romantic adventure. Ramon Revillo Jr. (SANG BALA ISINAG BUHAY) plays Hervo Penday, and unfortunate, downtrodden hero. His girlfriend caught the eye of a Caucasian villain, Conde (Edu Manzano, villain in CARNA). Conde and his followers are European colonists, and corrupt ones, you know how them Caucasian imperialists are! So the Filipinos hate us too! However, the setting appears to be the Middle East, because of the existence of turbans and belly dancers, yet Filipinos make lousy Arabs I assume it takes place in Tibet, Filipinos can pass for Tibetans, but not Indians or Egyptians.

Okay, so Hervo is hassled by Conde and other foreign devils. In this case, 'foreign devil' is literal. The invading whites are affiliated with a magical cult who bring the dead back to life! So the deserts are crawling with hungry zombies! Not only that, but Conde turns out to be a robot, yet this takes place in the old days!! Wait! There's moral! The leading villain is a talking head submerged in a large tank of water! How can poor unfortunate Ramon Revillo defeat all these enemies, plus ninja-like swordsmen who travel under the sand?? With his newly found magic sword, of course! Though the action isn't great, there are flat fights, swordplay, FX, & explosions before the hero gets the girl. \*1/2

#### PANOY ANG ALALAY NG PANDAY

Viva Video, 1993, in association with

Moviestars Production, Story & Screenplay: Tony Y. Reyes, Vic Sotto & Joey De Leon, CAST: Joey De Leon, Manz, Sharmaine Amaz, Sunshine Cruz, Val Sotto

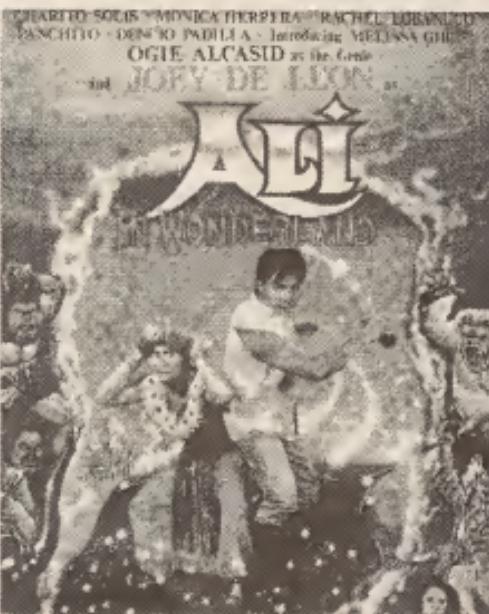
Joey De Leon's latest and worst satire. We've seen him satirize Batman, Superman and He-man, his new target is the Successful Filipino movie previously reviewed, DUGU NG PANDAY. Again, the spoof is too cheap to do an effective parody, it lacks 25% the budget of the original! So more of PANOY ANG ALALAY NG PANDAY is a

come ashore to kidnap women from a fishing village. So eventually, De Leon and his magic sword go into action. Again, the first half of the movie seems to be an original drama, the spoofing of the other film doesn't set in until we see more of the evil Arabs, around the middle of the film. There's a female hero who knows some martial arts, and she battles an evil witch who has a 'monster hand' (a puppet that looks like the plant monster from LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, which I hated too). But our hero Joey De Leon is far less spectacular. His fighting skill is even worse than that of Ramon Revillo Jr., from the first film. The battle on the desert, with De Leon sword fighting more 'sand ninjas', is only amusing if you've seen the original movie.

#### ALI IN WONDERLAND

1991, Presented by Philam Video International, Directed by Tony Reyes, Story & Screenplay Joey De Leon, Production Design: Melchor Defensor, Starring Joey De Leon, Pancito, Charlito Sols, Monica Herrera, Rachel Lobangco, Dencio Padilla, Melissa Gipe, and Ogie Alcasid as the Genie.

Now I'm starting to respect Joey De Leon, the Roger Corman of the Philippines, for what he is. He and partner in crime Tony Reyes are masters of low budget exploitation! SHE-MAN made me suspect that they take a popular superhero or theme, and then exploit it for as little money as possible. Hell,



pointless, lame drama, set in a typically poor village made of bamboo. The setting is in this Filipino village, and in modern times, eliminating any similarity to the original, which took place in the Middle East (I think), a few hundred years ago. This poor excuse of a satire has only a few scattered FX, and endless talking. Too bad, since anybody who's seen ALIAS BATMAN EN ROBIN or SHEMAN MISTRESS OF THE UNIVERSE knows Joey Da Leon has the ability to be somewhat entertaining. Joey again plays a blacksmith who obtains magic powers to fight powerful villains, as in SHEMAN. The story is hard for me to figure out, since I had my finger on the Scan button through most of the movie. After what seemed like an hour of pointless meandering, Arabian villains

most of the movie needn't be about fantasy or superheroes until the last 30 minutes! What happens before is pointless filler, shot in a cheap bamboo village! No expenses, no FX, no production values until the last half hour! By then, it will be too late for the viewer to get his money back. Then I saw PANOY ALALAY NG PANDAY, reviewed previously, which confirmed my suspicions of his rotten films. So here I go again, watching ALI IN WONDERLAND, and you know what?!! It's the exact same thing! I swear, there's a full hour of talking, before it finally has any sense of thrill or adventure! Fortunately, the last 30 minutes are adequate. They're not worth sitting through the first hour though, it's important to Fast Forward (not to be confused with 'Scanning').

or 'Fest Play.' Like many other De Leon films, this one looks amateur, like some super 8mm flick you'd read about in INDEPENDENT VIDEO or BACKYARD CINEMA.

It helps to understand Tagalog, but I gather Joey De Leon plays a lower class fisherman down on his luck. His beautiful girlfriend is destined to be married to some rich mobster, as part of some sort of prearranged marriage. So after endless dis-

logue and bullshit, Joey, as Ali, discovers a gene bottle on the beach. He releases the gene, who helps him to fight off the mobsters. The gene doesn't do a lot of magic, but performs a number of karate kicks as he and Ali (Joey De Leon) take on the bad guys. Then for some reason, both heroes take a canoe to a dangerous, primitive island. There they encounter a gorilla monster, a cyclops, and various tribes. Midget tribe, sexy amazon tribe, and a villainous tribe of 'lizard men' (they have lizard tails and blue

lips). These various battles and chases are remotely entertaining; the action isn't great, but the store bought Halloween costumes are put to good use.

Later, Ali and the gene get on a flying carpet and return to the Philippines, where those same mobsters have kidnapped Ali's girlfriend. There's a brief shoot out which isn't bad, and offers a chuckle or two."

played by Jimmy Lee (speaking English), who'd later push women out of windows in GOD OF GAMBLERS 1 & 4. Beautiful Page Laong plays an erotic dancer. \*\*

WOMAN NINJAS (J) - This '85 film shouldn't be confused with the 1991 video-series under the same Japanese title, KUNDICHI NINPO-CHO.

WORLD NINJA WAR: JIRAIYA (J) - Childish yet entertaining superhero TV series reviewed in OCs 8 and 14. Futuristic ninjas of all shapes and sizes battle it out, in search of a treasure called Paco. Elaborate FX \*\*\*1/2

jumbo, subplots and nonsense, our heroes confront the mysterious enemy, Chu Er Ming. But there are several Chu Er Mings! They all wear Chu Er Ming masks, which explains how this corrupt phantom can be so many pieces at once. This climactic

YAGYU CONSPIRACY (J) - Yet another Yagyu TV series. Are there any Yagyu experts out there who can set the story straight? There are enough Yagyu movies and TV shows to do a whole issue on.

YAGYU JUBEI (J) - Sonny Chiba's epic TV series from the 1970s, known by many titles, titles which apply to more than one movie, confusing matters all the more.

YAGYU SECRET SCROLLS (J) - Produced by Toho in 1968, this is the first movie about the infamous Yagyu ninjas, starring Toshirô Mifune. It had an equally elusive sequel, YAGYU SECRET SCROLLS-FLYING DRAGON SWORD.

confrontation is made all the more confusing because of the gadgets involved: flags, magnets, fans, hats, sun discs, and other shit which, as Husker Du might say, 'makes no sense at all'."

integrity I've tried to take these kinds of comments with a grain of salt, but the truth is, it hurts to hear these lies about me" - "Did you get so angry that you cried?" - "Everyone cries sometimes, but crying doesn't help any, and if I dwell on these little matters, I'll never feel good again."

Yip is HK's only "strip" star who's claim to fame is "Giant Breasts" and became the hot gossip topic of the town. Other "strip" stars can only eat her dust. "Am I that famous? I don't think SO. I think when you go to a public place and the fans come in thousands to see you, then you're famous." - "I think you have achieved that, every time you go out, all eyes are on you" - "It's different, they're just curious, not admiration. I don't have it like the superstars." - "Are there a lot of men chasing after you right now? And isn't there a man in your life?" - "No, they're only social friends. People think I'm wild and exotic, but I'm just the opposite, and very lonely." - "You said many times in the past that you choose acting over relationships, did you change your mind?" - "Girls have big hearts. Work is fine, but when you're too busy, then you wish some one would come along to take care and love you. But right now, that's asking too much."

## CELLULOID ASSASSINS

Also called WATARI THE NINJA BOY and WATARI DAI-NINJUTSU EIWA, this is Toei's influential fantasy from 1966, starring Yoshimori Kaneko, Japan's spoiled brat of ninjutsu. Based on a comic book by Semsei Shirose. \*\*

WHITE PHANTOM (A) - Definitely one of the better U.S.-made ninja movies, featuring a white ninja (Jay Roberts Jr.) dealing with a bad man in HK. The hero is remotely amusing, and the fights, done by Hong Kongers are better than average for a U.S. movie. The leader of the villains is called Heinzo Sakura,

## HONG KONG HEROES

enhances her femininity. Yet the other men in the film are foisted, until she and Yueh Hua finally fall in love. After plenty of mumbo

have a better figure than I do. It's all very natural. I feel hurt when they make fun of me using lies like this, one actor claims his chest hurt during a sex scene, because of my breasts. Some said I planned all these rumors for the publicity. I'm human, I have



Amy Yip

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Following articles  
by Ally appeared in the  
September 1990 issue of  
Asia, Hong Kong's top  
novel and gossip magazine,  
translated into English by  
Richard Weller.

香港世紀末感情語  
葉子輕聲說

**VIP-CHI MEI'S  
GIGANTIC  
BREASTS TOP  
THE TOWN'S  
GOSSEIP  
HEADLINES!  
AS HONG  
KONG RAPIDLY  
APPROACHES  
THE END OF  
HER  
DECADENT  
CENTURY!**

breasts are the real McCoy. I've checked them out myself. They're not (continued on page 26).

"GI" is here on location for an upcoming feature film. As the story goes, the film is about a man who has been separated from his wife for 10 years. He returns to his hometown and finds that his wife has moved on with another man. The man is heartbroken and decides to seek revenge. He hires a hitman to kill his wife's new husband. The hitman, played by a famous actor, arrives and kills the man. The man then returns to his wife and they are reunited. The film is set to be released next year.